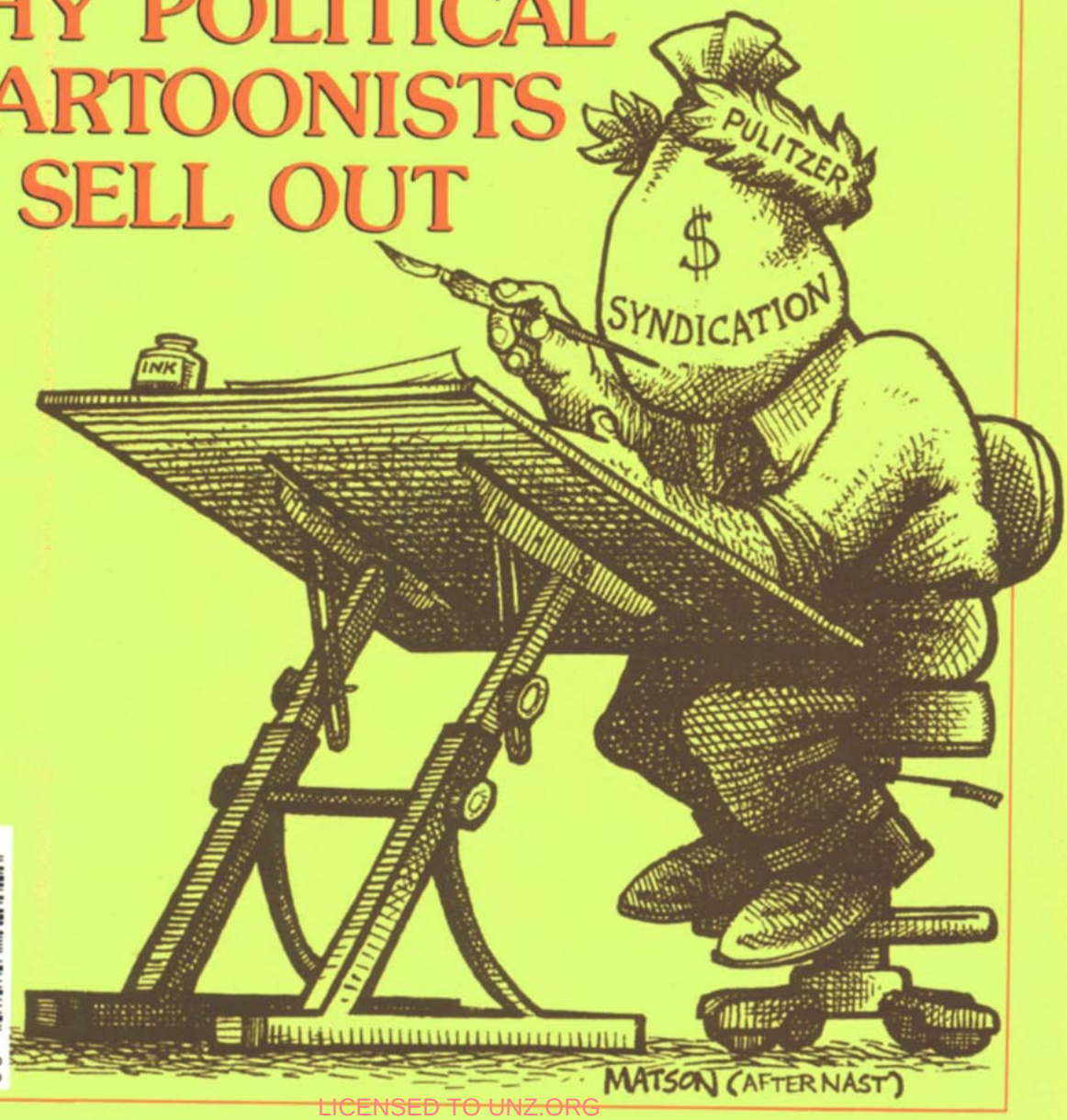
Reviews by James David Barber, Thomas Byrne Edsall, Ross K. Baker, Norman Ornstein, and Anna Quindlen.

The Washington Monthly

SEPTEMBER 1988/$3.00

WHY POLITICAL CARTOONISTS SELL OUT



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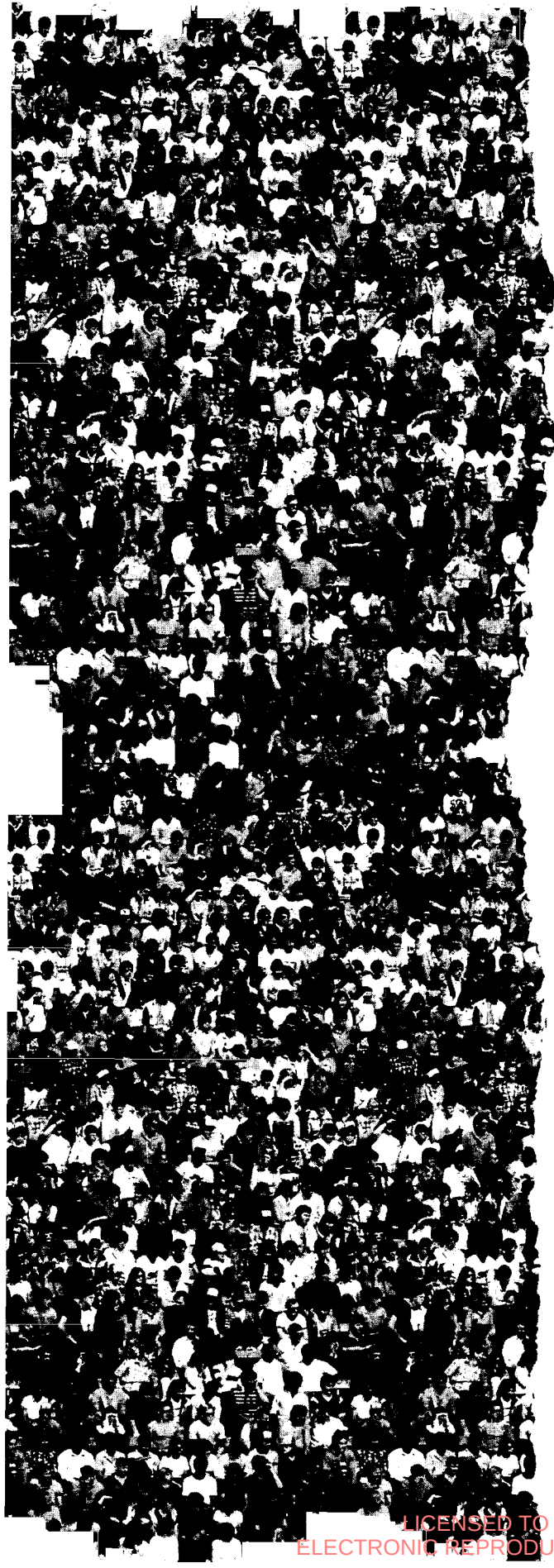

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The quote isn't accurate. But the numbers are.

In the last Presidential election, only 53% of those eligible actually voted.

The problem is worst among the youngest voters, the 18-to-24-year-old group. Less than half of them even register. Only 17% actually voted in 1986.

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LETTERS

Babbitt's Bennett baffle

"Why can't [William] Bennett distinguish," writes Bruce Babbitt ["The Billy Pulpit," July-August], "the teaching of values from the teaching of religion?" Babbitt seems unable to make the necessary distinctions himself.

He approvingly quotes Robert Coles on the desirable "hard thoughts of Jeremiah and Jesus"—but these are, precisely, *religious* teachers; so much so that I, for example, regard one as a genuine Prophet and the other as a false Messiah. But that is, of course, not the point at all; neither belongs in the schools as a teacher of values.

"A little less John Dewey and a little more original sin" is Babbitt's desideratum—but this stands his complaint about Bennett on its head. John Dewey certainly belongs in schools; but "original sin"—doesn't Babbitt know this?—is a sectarian religious doctrine. Judaism, which gave the world the textual basis of "original sin," utterly rejects this belief, and it's incoherent by the standards of some Eastern religions.

Why can't Babbitt distinguish the teaching of values from the teaching of religion?

ROBERT L. COHEN
Brooklyn, New York

Someone should acquaint Bruce Babbitt with the difference between St. John's University of New York City and St. John's College of Annapolis, Maryland. It is emphatically the latter, not the former, whose entire four-year, mandatory, no-electives curriculum comprises the so-called "Great Books."

RORY FORAN
Glen Burnie, Maryland

Hulk Hogan's nanny

We are a stepfather (David) and stepson (Benjamin), age 46 and age 10, who share an interest in the finer things of life. These include professional wrestling on cable TV and *The Washington Monthly.*

We were disappointed that, in your June issue, your article on professional wrestling ["The (THWAK) Deregulation of (THUMP) Pro Wrestling," Irvin Muchnick] departed from the True Faith of less needless government regulation. You correctly point out that this sport is a series of exhibitions, with the result determined before the exhibitors enter the ring. Then you called for more regulation, lest the poor dears (who may be overage and overweight) hurt themselves or each other.

Professional wrestlers are actor/athletes who, we believe, put on a very good show. They are rather like stunt men who have leading roles. Does TWM believe that stunt men and women should be given medical examinations before going about their work? Should they be checked by their government nannies before each performance? We think not.

DAVID HUDSON, BENJAMIN MILLER
Hilo, Hawaii

Lebanon or liberty

In "Tilting at Windmills" [May], Charles Peters says that the religious composition of the 220 marines killed in the Beirut barracks bombing is "further proof that the affluent are not doing their part in the defense of their country."

But how does intervening on the side of an authoritarian and unrepresentative religious-minority government in Lebanon equate with defending America?

There will always be a shortage of people willing to die for the American empire. There will never be a lack of men and women willing to risk their lives for American liberty.

We need no draft to defend West Virginia, Mr. Peters. Only to protect Chevron's oil in Kuwaiti tankers.

LLEWELLYN H. ROCKWELL JR.
Palo Alto, California

The editor replies:

The fact that it was criminally stupid to station the marines in that Beirut barracks does not alter the criminal selfishness of the rich who don't serve in the armed forces.

Jackson's half-truths

I admire your healthy skepticism of bureaucracy, administrators, teachers, etc. I only wish that skepticism could be extended to the often-exaggerated claims of politicians such as Jesse Jackson.

In "Tilting at Windmills" in June I think you give the Rev. Jackson far too much praise. His poetry may be pretty, but the message cited is full of half-truths. Jackson is not really a child of the underclass.

Yes, Jackson has a gift for "communicat[ing] on a direct human level." But we've been burned once, actually twice, this decade by the claims of a "Great Communicator."

NOAH FINKEL
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

NOW and then

Molly Yard states that your description of the "worst" public interest groups is utterly untrue of NOW ["Letters," July-August], but I believe that in some respects the description is apt. As an example of NOW's propensity to alienate the public, I cite the following example.

This spring it was discovered that our county prenatal and family planning clinic had produced a manual on sex education, funded by the federal government, which stated that homosexual relations were "natural and healthy." In the wake of public response to these statements (the manual was written by Cooper Thompson, a member of the "Campaign to End Homophobia"), Strafford County commissioners sought to cut off funds to the clinic.

Ms. Yard lost little time in seeking to gain publicity for NOW and to further exploit an issue dividing our com-

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munity. She characterized the commissioners as "victims of homophobia," with the implication that only such "victims" might oppose the use of public funds, in the age of AIDS, to sanction a homosexual lifestyle for adolescents.

Ms. Yard never consulted with those who actually provide services in our clinic. Had she consulted with them she might have discovered that her claimed "broad participation by parents" in preparing the above-mentioned manual was a myth.

Where was NOW several years ago when HEW threatened to cut off the clinic's funds because it wished to continue to provide services for low-income women across our state border? The doctors providing services fought a losing battle against a rigid federal bureaucracy without any support from such organizations as NOW. Ms. Yard's attitude is at best statist and elitist, at worst condescending.

It is hard to believe that Ms. Yard, in her intrusion into this affair, was not more interested in promoting the agenda of peripheral groups such as the "Campaign to End Homophobia" than the provision of prenatal and delivery care for low-income women.

PATRICIA K. CUSACK
Dover, New Hampshire

You'd be agitated too

Your lead item in the July-August "Tilting at Windmills" notes a discrepancy between a *New York Times* headline, which said our ambassador in Lebanon came under fire, and the last sentence in the story, which said the ambassador's guard fired in the air to clear traffic. You comment that the Lebanese involved, presumably innocent bystanders, had reason to be agitated.

The pleasure of having a go at both *The New York Times* and an ambassador whose guards recklessly clear traffic by shooting must be irresistible. Unfortunately, the facts make the original headline the accurate part of the piece. As *The Washington Post*, but not the *Times*, published in a follow-up story, the Lebanese gunmen, described as a "private security firm," were the ones who fired first.

JAMES A. KELLY
Arlington, Virginia

Women in power

Your article on Margaret Thatcher (with the irresistible headline) ["Is Margaret Thatcher a Woman?" Polly Toynbee, May] was a great case study in the dilemma facing feminists in the United States. Eleanor Smeal is urging not women but "feminists" to run for office. If the Republicans put up a woman for vice president, will women support the symbol or oppose the substance?

Still, I don't think the picture of women in power is quite as grim as you paint it. Though I agree that class, race, and education are often greater motivators than gender, it may be true that women in power respond better to

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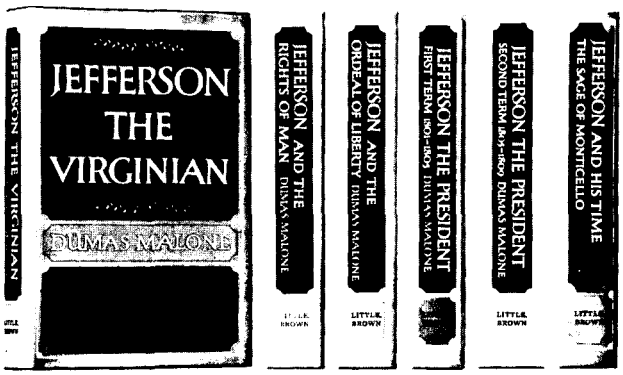

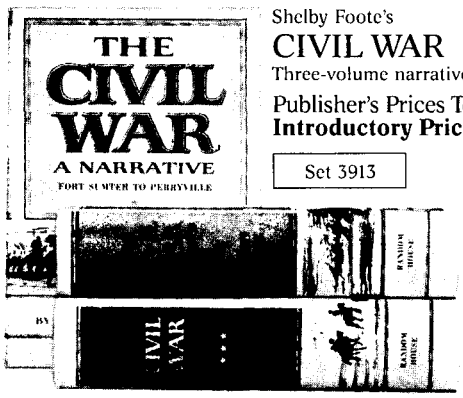

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women's issues. You noted that women workers in general feel they must take care of their children because if they don't no one else will.

SIGNE WILKINSON
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Whose dough boy?

Bob Ortega's otherwise excellent reporting on the sales by Alaska Native corporations of their tax losses to major U.S. corporations ["Ice Fishing," July-August] at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars to the U.S. Treasury is marred in two respects:

First, the article leaves the misleading impression that the big winners and behind-the-scenes manipulators were national corporations like Pillsbury, Quaker Oats, Drexel Burnham, and others. Actually, as the article also somewhat contrarily shows, the biggest gainers were the most successful of the Alaska Native corporations. And the key manipulators were lawyers and politicians acting on their behalf.

Second, the Alaska Native corporations were not intended to protect lands traditionally used for Native hunting, fishing, trapping, and berry-picking. Corporate land comprises only a very small portion of such traditional lands, and the corporations have mixed goals of preservation and development.

The Alaska Native people still depend much more on the land, and on their traditional hunting and fishing cultures, than on the corporations that Congress created.

THOMAS A. MOREHOUSE
Anchorage, Alaska

Right place, wrong time

A quibble with Matthew Cooper's otherwise enlightening piece on Phillip Longman ["The Saturday Night Massacre," June]. I'm puzzled by the line, "After two years at AGE and with reports continuing to circulate in the *National Journal* that Longman's views were an embarrassment, he quit."

The *National Journal* item cited actually ran in October 1987—nearly six months after Longman had reportedly quit, according to his colleagues, "out of frustration with the mounting political pressure" emanating from AGE's congressional sponsors.

JULIE KOSTERLITZ
Washington, D.C.

Ms. Kosterlitz is a staff correspondent for the National Journal.

World War which?

In describing the 1919 Abrams case ["Political Booknotes," May], Jonathan Rosenblum states that "the U.S. had joined the fight against the Axis powers; the Russians had allied themselves with Germany." Of course, the U.S. was at war with the Central powers, and neither imperial Russia nor the Soviet Union was at any time during the First World War allied with Germany.

JEFF SCHNEIDER
Urbana, Illinois

The editors reply:

The first error escaped the editors' attention, the second was of their own creation.

Save the children

I heartily agree with Judge Lois Forer's statement ["Bring Back the Orphanage," April] that the one thing abused children have in common is that "they desperately need a safe, permanent home." Unfortunately, there is no magic solution, and to think that orphanages would provide the answer is both simplistic and naive.

Most of us cannot comprehend the intensity with which the mistreated child will cling to his abusive parent. When such a child is removed from his home, he feels rejected and abandoned, and fully responsible for his own misfortune. If only he weren't so bad, he reasons, his parents wouldn't have abused him, and he would still be home where he belongs. He must have deserved it all.

The reason for this paradox is grounded in the fundamental nature of human attachment. Every child seeks from the beginning to establish a special bond with the one or two principal adults in his life and will seek to maintain that bond even in the face of the most severe abuse or neglect.

What is needed is not orphanages or foster homes but an all-out effort to salvage what one can of the child's opportunity to live with those who brought him into this world. Clearly, this will not always be possible, or even desirable, but in the majority of cases it is. It will require close monitoring of the family's progress for years, and aside from psychotherapeutic intervention, the provision of basic supports, such as making sure that Dad goes to A.A. or finds employment. It will be difficult and costly but so are the years spent in foster care or institutional settings.

MARIANNE GOLDSMITH
Providence, Rhode Island

Dr. Goldsmith is the attending child psychiatrist at the Emma Pendleton Bradley Hospital.

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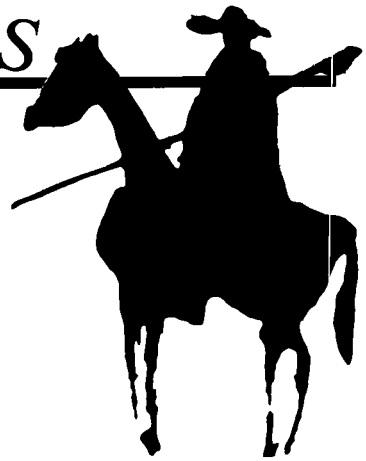
TILTING AT WINDMILLS



If you want to understand how the budget gets inflated, consider that the new Air Force One and its backup each are designed to carry 1,953 meals. This has required the construction of a new kitchen at Andrews Air Force Base that is capable of turning out 4,000 meals. The need for the meals is based on a "worst case scenario" under which the Air Force estimates that it might be necessary to feed the 93 people aboard each plane for seven days.

This kind of thinking lies behind most of the items in the federal budget. And the sad fact is that the people who are supposed to scrutinize budget requests—from senators and congressmen and their staffs to the OMB to, in this case, the Pentagon superiors of the Air Force personnel who did the requesting—seldom ask such simple questions as, "Has Air Force One ever gone as much as *one* day when it wasn't in a place where food could be obtained?"...

Suppose you belong to the Columbus, Ohio, bar association or the medical society of Franklin County (where Columbus is located) and you want to get together with members of both professions for a program of continuing medical and legal education. Where would you choose to go? A hotel meeting room in Columbus or one of its suburbs? Well, you could be sitting there all by yourself. The rest of the fellows will be at the Breckenridge Hilton in the Colorado Rockies for the Interdiscipline Ski Conference in February. The brochure promises "6 Day 'Ski the Summit Passes' lift tickets," "beautifully decorated guest rooms" with mini-refrigerators, wet bars, and "sweeping views of the mountains." Tax deductible? Of course....

We haven't said many kind words about Michael Dukakis. But I want to congratulate him for having consistently displayed the ability to rise to the demands of the occasion—from the first debate in Houston through his acceptance speech in Atlanta. He has maintained an air of calm and reasonableness that has to be reassuring to the people he will lead for the next four years. (I think he is going to win the election.) This is a man who may not do anything great but who is certainly not going to do anything silly, stupid, or criminal, and that is a profound relief after the past eight years....

Referring to Rose Cipollone, the New Jersey woman whose death from lung cancer inspired a recent suit against a tobacco company, a defense attorney said, "She knew this bad habit was not good for her," as if this excused the company from liability. The point is that she could know the habit was bad and know that she should stop but not be able to because she was addicted.

It seems to me that it is the addictive quality of cigarettes on which plaintiffs' lawyers should focus in these lung cancer cases. The cigarette manufacturers did not warn the smoker of the danger of addiction, so that even after the Surgeon General's "dangerous to your health" warning began to appear, the companies still were not telling people they shouldn't start something they couldn't stop. Thus, even though people knew that years of smoking could cause lung cancer, many of them thought smoking was something they could stop anytime and thus avoid long-term risks to their health.

Compare cigarettes to what is supposed to be the most addictive substance around. In June, under a headline warning that crack is "a nearly unbreakable habit," *The New York Times* published an article that said, "Most people who got started with crack were addicted in six months to a year." Well, I became addicted to cigarettes within six *weeks*. Soon after I started smoking in 1945, I happened to come

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across the only publication that was exposing the dangers of tobacco at that time, George Seldes's *In Fact*. I was persuaded. I tried to stop. I failed, as I failed each of the score of times I tried to quit over the next 25 years. I finally quit not in a triumph of character but because of a serious illness that killed my desire to smoke for long enough to get me over the addictive hump. . . .

Speaking of tobacco, there are two very heartening developments I must report to you. First, Nigeria plans to prohibit all cigarette advertising by the end of this year—every nation should do the same.

Second, when the modeling agency for which Jesse Holmes works called to ask him to audition for a cigarette ad for Benson and Hedges, he refused. He could have received $7,500 for the appearance. He is, on principle, refusing to do cigarette ads. Why, one wonders, can't all those brave, tough, reporters who work for big newspapers take a similar stand and tell the Kay Grahams and Punch Sulzbergers and Al Neuharths that they aren't going to work for an enterprise that publishes cigarette advertising? Why do Graham and Sulzberger and Neuharth even need to be prodded to do the right thing? It's because they feel another pressure, the pressure to maximize profits. But that's not a good excuse. *The New Yorker* and *Reader's Digest* and the television networks all have proved that you can succeed without cigarette advertising. . . .

One of the more miserable aspects of the life of a writer is waking up in the middle of the night, after your book or article has gone to press, realizing that there was something you didn't say that you most definitely should have said. In the case of my new book, *Tilting at Windmills*, my greatest regret has to do with public school teachers. In making the point that private schools in Washington, D.C. have better teachers than the public schools, even though they pay lower salaries, I was trying to persuade the public schools to open their doors to the talented liberal arts graduates who make the private schools better but usually can't be hired by the public schools because they do not have the education degrees that most public schools require.

But I neglected to mention another reason good teachers don't go into the public schools —at least the urban ones. It is fear—fear of violence. In just one week this spring, there were four assaults on New York City public school teachers. One was clubbed repeatedly with a baseball bat and was hospitalized in critical condition and in danger of losing the sight in one of his eyes. Until the public schools and the police act decisively to end this kind of violence, we can't expect anyone but fools or saints to teach in ghetto schools.

Another reason good teachers prefer private schools is the overstaffed, third-rate bureaucracies that run many public school systems and that seem to be dedicated to driving intelligent teachers around the bend. The answer to the problem is for the public to elect first-rate people to local school boards and for legislatures to give these boards the power to get rid of administrators who do nothing but get in the way. . . .

Of all the nightmares about what the deficit can do to us, one of my worst concerns is the bondholders. If they don't like what the government is doing they can stop buying the bonds that finance the deficit. The trouble is that they are mostly conservative fellows, meaning that they will pressure any government, Democratic or Republican, to follow conservative policies. Worst of all, what they fear the most is inflation, so they can be counted upon to oppose policies that run even remote risks of being inflationary even when such policies might be desperately needed to stimulate the economy.

It may be that they would not actually carry out their threat to withdraw from the bond market, but the threats themselves may be enough to influence what the government does. . . .

Few lead sentences could have been more predictable than this one from a recent Associated Press story:

"In the wake of the drowning of a recruit, the Navy has reviewed its training program and concluded that there were no major problems. . . ."

The best way to end corruption in the Pentagon is to forbid military retirees from working for military contractors. As things stand now, far too many officers spend half their days thinking

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about how to position themselves for a good job with McDonnell Douglas or Martin Marietta when they retire. This means they are going to lean over backwards to be tender to defense contractors when it is their duty to lean over backwards to be tough....

Three Washington physicians recently settled a malpractice suit for $4 million. Sounds like they must be bad doctors, doesn't it? They aren't. They are highly respected. When they were sued, more than a hundred nurses who had worked with them paid $2,400 to buy an advertisement in *The Washington Post* expressing their regard and support for the doctors. Nurses know better than anyone else when doctors are good and when they're bad, so this was an impressive tribute.

Still it is possible for even the best to make mistakes and this may have been one. A baby was left helpless, unable to see, speak, walk or feed himself. Four million dollars, however, seems more than will be needed to take care of the child. And, although it will be paid not by the three doctors but by their insurers, the ultimate cost of malpractice insurance is reflected in the medical bills we all pay.

The solution is to take malpractice suits out of the courts and handle them on a no-fault basis. The victim would be compensated, but only the amount he really needs, which in this case probably would have been less than $1 million instead of $4 million....

To make sure such a system is conscionable, there would have to be a way of punishing doctors who make repeated mistakes—they should be deprived of their licenses. Since we can't rely on the current doctor-dominated licensing boards to be tough enough, we should put a majority of lay members on the boards. Indeed, this should be done with all licensing groups because of their natural tendency toward self-protective guild-ism. I would urge that most of the lay members on medical boards should be lawyers and vice versa. No two groups are more sensitive to the other's faults or less sensitive to their own....

Now that I've had kind words for public school teachers and even for three doctors, I might as well go all the way and say something nice about John Lehman, the former secretary of the Navy, who has long been one of my favorite targets, and who, along with his friend, Melvyn R. Paisley, is now being rewarded with the ignominy he has so long deserved. But there is one thing Lehman is being criticized for that should instead have earned him high praise. It is the speed and the red-tape cutting involved in his acquisition for the Navy of the unmanned drone aircraft manufactured by Israel.

The need for the drone had been demonstrated when Navy planes were shot down over Lebanon on missions that could have been performed by pilotless aircraft. The Israeli drone worked. And it was cheap. The alternative was for the Navy to develop its own. The United States Army had been wasting immense sums in following just such a course—developing its own drone, the Aquila, which turned out not to work at all well.

So in this case Lehman was right. Yet on July 28 *The Washington Post* ran an article by Joe Pichirallo that strongly suggested Lehman had done wrong and was illustrated by photographs of Lehman and Paisley, even though the evidence of wrongdoing or of Paisley's involvement in it was slight. The story showed no awareness of such key facts as the superiority of the Israeli drone and its relative inexpensiveness or of the sad story of the Army's attempt to develop its own drone. If he was not aware of relevant background, why was Pichirallo assigned to the story? If for some reason the assignment had to be made to a reporter who didn't have the necessary background, why wasn't he given an editor who knew the relevant facts?....

Speaking of the *Post*, its customary generosity of spirit toward its competition was again illustrated on July 9 under the headline, "Post Wins 28 Newspaper Design Awards." It was not until the sixth paragraph of the story that the reader learned, "*The Washington Times* won the most design awards this year, 38."...

I bet you're now saying the next thing he's going to do is say something nice about lawyers. You're right. Sometimes our tendency to assume the worst about them, although richly justified by experience, leads to unfairness. Not long ago I clipped an

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article from the *Indianapolis Star* with a headline that seemed to promise persuasive evidence for my conviction that the members of the bar are a trifle too concerned with material reward:

"Widow's home to be auctioned to pay longstanding attorney's fee"

For the first eight paragraphs of the story, including all that appeared on the first page, the facts recounted were sympathetic to the widow, and the reader who got no further would have assumed here was another outrage committed by a greedy lawyer.

But then you found out that the reason the sweet old lady had had to hire the lawyer was that she and her husband had neglected to file tax returns for several years. The lawyer then waited three years but did not receive his fee. Not only was he not paid, the widow never made an offer to pay half or one-third or even to discuss the matter. . . .

Timothy Noah tells me that the South Carolina principal he praised in these pages has been promoted. Sounds good. A deserving man is rewarded, right? Wrong, he was given a meaningless bureaucratic role as assistant superintendent of schools in the Orangeburg District.

One of the great problems in public education today is that outstanding principals—and teachers—can usually attain the salary level they deserve only if they become part of the bureaucracy. The catch is that the skills that made them good teachers and good principals often aren't the skills needed in the administrative offices. Or the administrative job actually consists of papershuffling and other phony forms of make-work. The solution is to keep the best teachers and principals where they are and pay them a lot more. . . .

One of the great articles of liberal faith is that it costs more to keep people in jail than it does to let them go free. Now comes the National Institute of Justice with a study that says the exact opposite. While it costs $25,000 a year to keep the average criminal in prison, the crimes he commits after release cost society $430,000. Since this study was performed under the auspices of the Republican Department of Justice, its findings cannot be considered above suspicion. Nevertheless, the gap between the two figures is dramatic enough that I suspect that this is another liberal myth that is ready for burial. . . .

Recently a Roper survey asked Americans, Japanese, and Western Europeans to rank the most important aspects of their lives. For the Americans, work was eighth; for the Western Europeans, it was fourth; for the Japanese, second. . . .

Of the $3.5 billion of U.S. aid committed to the Philippines last year, more than $2 billion remains unused, writes Marc Lerner of *The Washington Times*. I saw this kind of thing happen repeatedly when I was in the foreign

How many undeserved radar tickets were issued last year?

a) 1,012,317 **b)** 649,119 **c)** 0 **d)** No one knows

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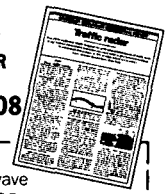

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affairs bureaucracy in the 1960s. A warm-hearted concern for the plight of another country—or sometimes an AID bureaucrat's desire to unload funds fast as the fiscal year draws to a close—causes money to be wasted because we insist on sending it before projects for which it could be sensibly used have been identified. There is such a satisfying feeling when Congress passes emergency aid for a needy nation and the president signs it with a flourish. But people tend to forget to look at what the money finally accomplishes. Lerner deserves praise for coming up with this story, but there are a few crucial questions he left unanswered. How much of the unspent money reverts to the U.S. Treasury? How much is left under the control of the Filipinos? To the extent Mrs. Aquino has spent it, has she done so wisely?...

I doubt that Michael Dukakis has the imagination to advocate any bold program, but I can't help hoping that he'll seize the opportunity to take advantage of the current wave of public concern about the greenhouse effect and the polluted oceans to propose a worldwide effort to do whatever has to be done to save the environment from disaster....

There is good news for all of us who have been compelled to sit through one boring meeting after another. "A recent review of studies on brainstorming," reports *The New York Times*, "found that on average brainstorming groups did less well than the same number of people pooling ideas they came up with on their own."

I have recently had extensive dealings with an organization that seems to spend almost all of its time in meetings, leaving its employees only a few minutes a day to actually do something. Such organizations are common in government and among corporations whose previous leadership has built enough cash flow to spare present employees from bottom-line worries. In the meetings, the participants are usually preoccupied with impressing one another—and their superiors. The problem is that everyone tends to forget about impressing the world with real accomplishment by the organization.

The private company will ultimately pay the penalty as that cash flow dries up, but in government the meetings go on and on and on and on....

'Thirty Vietnamese refugees, depressed by slim prospects of resettlement in third countries, have attempted suicide in Thai camps in the last few months," according to a Reuters report from Bangkok. We have an obligation to these people. Our government encouraged the Vietnamese to resist communism. We said we would stand by them, that they could count on us. Then we pulled out. Even those of us who, like the editors of this magazine, feel we should never have sent troops in the first place and were right to withdraw, must acknowledge our debt to those left behind. Certainly those who have had the gumption to risk death from Thai pirates and North Vietnamese gunboats as they escaped deserve to have us open our doors to them.

Among the Indochinese to whom we are indebted, we owe the most to the Hmong tribesmen of Laos, who sided with us in the war and are therefore blacklisted by the communist Pathet Lao regime that now rules Laos. Roughly 40 thousand of them escaped to refugee camps in Thailand and now need to be resettled. For a variety of cultural reasons, they need more help than other refugees. If you have talked to the Americans who worked with them during the war, you know that we owe them that help....

Until the late sixties, of the several thousand males I had met in my life, only two had been named Jason. Then it seemed as if every other infant I met turned out to be a Jason. Why were so many parents suddenly so enchanted with this previously rare name? I feared some kind of snobbery was involved and was relieved to discover this year that Jason had finally dropped from the top ten list of children's names, having been replaced by good, solid, old-fashioned Matthew.

However, my delight in this development quickly turned into gloom when I considered the latest developments in feminine nomenclature. The girl's name that was dropped from the top ten this year was good old Elizabeth. It was replaced by Samantha. And most of the other names in the female top ten are not above suspicion. They include Ashley, Amanda, Stephanie, and Nicole, and the most suspect of all, Tiffany....

—*Charles Peters*

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For the residents of Love Canal, it was bad enough dealing with 21,800 tons of toxic ooze. Then they had to deal with the bureaucrats.

The Big Sleazy:

Love Canal Ten Years Later

by Andrew Danzo

"The cap" is a masterpiece of engineering understatement. From the corner of Frontier Avenue and 100th Street, it appears to be nothing more than a huge expanse of turf, gently mounded toward the center. Even the brick building on the other side hardly seems intrusive. No doubt it's the groundskeeper's shop.

Visitors don't immediately grasp the significance, says Joann Hale, whose house is buried along with 236 others beneath "the cap." That's why she takes guests around to the opposite corner, the one farthest in from the streets, the place where the drums are. "Those barrels, they love it," Hale says. "It's a great visual."

What would Love Canal be, after all, without barrels?

Ten years ago, Love Canal spilled into its neighbors' homes and became the nation's first officially proclaimed environmental disaster. This wasn't a vague threat like smog or a dirty river or problems with the food chain. It was a chemical swamp 3,000 feet long. And it was in people's backyards—99 of them to be exact. It was drums popping from the ground where children played. It was ooze seeping through basement walls.

Within two years, in 1980, Congress created the Superfund, a multi-billion dollar program to search out and destroy—or at least confine—the abandoned dumps that suddenly seemed to be everywhere across the country. State governments also took an interest, creating their own mini-Superfunds. New consultants came forth, speaking the language of "remedial action master plans," "thermal destruction units," and "plasma arcs."

But after ten years, Love Canal is still an environmental and bureaucratic quagmire. The dump site itself, about ten football fields long, has only been contained, not cleaned up. It costs about a half-million dollars a year to maintain, and chemicals from Love Canal still contaminate nearby streams and a school yard. The U.S. Justice Department suit against Occidental Chemical to determine financial responsibility for the site—which has already cost about $250 million—is not expected to come to trial for at least another two years.

Two different evacuations allowed about 1,000 nearby families to leave, most with state and federal assistance. Bulldozers knocked 237 houses and an elementary school into their basements and buried them. Surrounding that field are ten blocks of mostly empty, crumbling homes. But the arbitrary boundary that defined the buyout zone ran down the middle of creeks and split neighbors with adjacent garages. Those on the wrong side speak bitterly of being left behind with collapsed property values and

Andrew Danzo is a Buffalo writer.

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possible health risks.

Most troubling of all, there has been no conclusive study of Love Canal's actual effects on its residents' health. As the New York state health department decides this year whether to try to resell the homes, it doesn't even know how healthy or sick the Love Canal refugees are because it hasn't kept track of them. It's just beginning the enormous task of locating those who moved. Residents of the area have complained of health problems ranging from miscarriages to cancer. But they still can't say whether Love Canal is to blame or whether it will affect their future health.

A tragic story in its own right, Love Canal points toward larger failings. Since Congress created the Superfund, the Environmental Protection Agency has put more than 900 sites on its list of the nation's most dangerous dumps. But only 13 have been cleaned up or contained to the point where they are now considered safe. Love Canal is hardly the biggest. In the Niagara area alone, Occidental has two other dumps with three to four times as much hazardous waste, and the EPA doesn't even rank Love Canal in the top 10 percent of the nation's most dangerous waste sites. But its significance is large. Ten years ago, Love Canal was a powerful symbol of environmental terror. Today it symbolizes the state and federal government's limited ability to cope.

Basement sludge

The Niagara Falls tourist maps don't give Love Canal's location, but the cars with the out-of-state plates find it anyway, driving slowly through with home video cameras whirring. Once visitors get over the fact that Love Canal itself now looks more like a fairway than a dump, they don't leave disappointed. There is something eerie about the surrounding neighborhood of closely spaced homes; it looks like a company town that the company left in a hurry. Only 70 households remain spread over ten blocks, dwelling among 527 private homes and a 304-unit public housing complex. "Nobody's got the guts to come out and say it's safe," says Louise Lewis, one of the holdouts who would like to have some neighbors again.

The presence of Lewis and the others only throws the desolation into sharper contrast—a woman carries groceries from a car parked on an otherwise deserted street; kids ride their bikes in lazy zigzags past crumbling, boarded-up homes. On 93rd Street, the venetian blinds hang twisted in the windows of the elementary school, as though a strong wind has blown through the empty building.

The 93rd Street Elementary School was only a couple of years old in 1955, when Emmett Berard and his wife moved into their new brick ranch-style on Shantz Avenue, just around the corner. To the 30-year-old construction worker, it was a nice neighborhood of families just starting out. Only two years earlier the Hooker Chemical Corporation, now owned by Occidental, had finished filling in a huge trench in the eastern corner of the city of Niagara Falls, several blocks away. Hooker, which had been manufacturing pesticides and fire retardants (in part for military clothing), deposited more than 200 different toxic chemicals into the trench. There are so many different chemicals mixed among the estimated 21,800 tons that researchers have given up trying to identify them all.

The trench had been dug in the 1890s by William Love, a man with a vision of a hydroelectric canal that would bypass Niagara Falls to power a new industrial city alongside. The plan went bust, but residents of the rural area got a good swimming hole in the bargain. Some residents continued swimming there after 1942, when Hooker started filling the canal, but they said the water had begun to sting.

Niagara Falls was still growing and young families were moving into the city's eastern corner when Hooker finished with the canal and covered it over in 1953. Seeing the need for a new elementary school, the city board of education approached Hooker about buying the dump. Lawyers differ about Hooker's willingness to part with the land. But when the company finally did turn it over to the board for one dollar, the deed warned that chemical wastes were buried there and that Hooker was absolving itself of responsibility for whatever might happen at the dump, "including death resulting therefrom."

The disclaimer did no more to dissuade the gung-ho board than did the discovery of buried waste drums when construction workers dug the new 99th Street School's foundation. The board moved the school site slightly as a result of the drums and built a drainage system so liquids seeping from the old canal wouldn't flood the basement. They placed the school's baseball diamond atop the dump itself. The board of education also hauled about 3,000 cubic yards of "fill" from the dump grounds to its other new elementary school over on 93rd Street. Then the board sold some of the remaining canal land to the city and private owners. By the early 1970s there were nearly a hundred homes on 97th and 99th streets with backyards abutting a long empty lot that should have been 98th Street but was really a chemical-filled trench.

The dump's presence was no secret. Since the late 1950s there had been intermittent reports of unpleasant encounters with chemicals in the big lot behind the new houses and the school. Nunzio LoVerdi, a

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tenant in a nearby public housing complex until several months ago, says that when he visited the 99th Street School in 1969 to discuss his son's schooling, teachers were worried. "The teachers told us this was a chemical dump and the stink was terrible," he recalls. Nevertheless, the warnings didn't seem serious enough to alarm residents, many of whom worked at Hooker and the other chemical companies that had created a forest of distillation columns and reactor vessels along the Niagara River just above the famous cataracts.

But by the mid-1970s residents were complaining more frequently and openly about their noxious neighbor. First it was the pungent fumes wafting from the big lot. Then after several seasons of unusually heavy rain and snow, the complaints became more urgent. By 1976, people along 97th and 99th streets were finding dead bushes in their yards, thick oils fouling their basement pumps, and industrial odors drifting through their homes. Precipitation had leaked into the old canal and was displacing its hazardous wastes like water in an overflowing bathtub. Residents' anxiety grew when state environmental officials visited their neighborhood later that year looking for the source of chemicals that had moved down the Niagara River, contaminating fish in Lake Ontario.

For nearly two years, the local, state, and, finally, federal governments looked into the problem. Local officials talked with a consultant and Hooker Chemical about a project to stem the dump's leakage. They also sought to calm residents, sometimes using tactics that infuriated. Joann Hale remembers one early meeting when she nervously asked a local health official whether construction might not release chemicals from the dump. "What do you think they have buried there, an atomic bomb?" she recalls the man replying.

State and federal technicians were amassing a growing catalog of tests that showed chemicals had indeed infiltrated some homes along the old canal, and health officials began studying the increasingly edgy residents. On August 2, 1978, after state researchers found that there had been an unusual number of miscarriages among women living near the dump, the New York state health commissioner declared an emergency around the canal and suggested that pregnant women and children under two years old move from the 97th and 99th street homes. As for how those women and children might comply, that was their problem. Months of growing concern gave way to panic and "Evacuate Us Now!" signs.

Hugh Carey, then governor and facing reelection that fall, called for federal aid, and days later he was able to tell the Love Canal residents he had succeeded—the state, with federal help, would buy 237 homes along both sides of 97th and 99th streets. Within a week, the suggested relocation of a handful of residents had escalated into the permanent evacuation of hundreds; Love Canal had gone from a state health problem to a national disaster.

A mere six miles up the Niagara River from one of America's great natural wonders, the consequences of environmental degradation had become terrifyingly tangible. Foul-smelling sludge oozed through the cinder-block walls of basement rec rooms. Anybody with eyes and a family and a mortgage knew this was bad. At Love Canal, the environmental movement found its proletariat.

"Nobody wanted another Love Canal in their community," says Paul J. Allan, spokesman for the Natural Resources Defense Council, "and when they realized there were a lot of them, it caused the type of grass-roots uprising that politicians understand."

The tax assessor's map

Government may not have responded as fast as everyone would have liked, but by the fall of 1978 it was moving people out and sealing off the dump. Several blocks away, however, well beyond the initial evacuation zone, Emmett Berard noticed something in his basement that he hadn't seen there before: black ooze. "The stinkiest thing I ever saw," he recalls. "It came from the Love Canal; I don't care what they say." Until it was filled a couple of decades earlier, a wide natural depression had run from the canal area toward Berard's house. He concluded that chemicals had escaped the dump through that swale.

Several blocks over, on 96th Street, seven-year-old Jon Kenny went into convulsions that fall and died. The boy had kidney disease and related immunological problems. His mother, Luella, had noted that he repeatedly improved during hospital stays but worsened when he came home. She became convinced that it had something to do with the storm sewer that emptied into Black Creek right behind her home, which also resided outside the first evacuation zone. "You could smell it and you could see the oily film on the surface of the water," Kenny recalls.

On the other side of the neighborhood, a 27-year-old housewife named Lois Gibbs was going door to door collecting information on her neighbors' health. Gibbs was worried. When she moved to 101st Street in 1974, her year-old son, Michael, was fine. Then he developed epilepsy, asthma, and liver problems. And when she gave birth two years later to a daughter, Melissa, the girl suffered from a rare blood disorder. Gibbs quickly emerged as a neighborhood leader armed with disturbing information.

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Surveys by her Love Canal Homeowners Association and Beverly Paigen, who was then a cancer researcher at Roswell Park Memorial Institute in nearby Buffalo, showed high miscarriage and birth defect rates in places beyond the original evacuation zone. The rates were highest for women living around the filled-in swales that crossed the historically marshy neighborhood. The surveys also turned up large numbers of urinary disorders, nervous breakdowns, epilepsy cases, and other problems. Paigen was alarmed at the implication that Love Canal was causing problems well beyond the official borders, and she joined residents calling for a wider evacuation. "It just looked like a very toxic situation," she says.

State public health officials thought otherwise. Even after confirming Luella Kenny's suspicion that Love Canal wastes had escaped into storm sewers and reached neighborhood creeks, the officials said they had no evidence that residents were at risk. Many residents were outraged. In September 1978, as the state was buying up homes immediately around the dump, the New York state health department issued a report entitled "Love Canal: Public Health Time Bomb." Now those officials wanted to muffle the ticking.

Some saw a correlation between the apparent change in official attitude and the avalanche of new dumpsite discoveries that followed Love Canal. "When they thought Love Canal was an isolated problem they behaved like public officials concerned with public health," says Paigen. "When they saw it was a statewide problem that the federal government wouldn't help with, they were afraid it would bankrupt New York State."

Peter Slocum, a state health department spokesman, denies that, saying the department's critics wanted it to find things that weren't there. "There was not the evidence to make the case that people wanted to make," he says. "I don't think there's evidence that the health department turned tail and ran."

The U.S. Justice Department, meanwhile, was making a case of its own. Soon after filing suit against Hooker in late 1979, it commissioned a study of genetic damage among Love Canal residents. The study was preliminary, involving a small number of people and no control group. But when it found genetic damage in some residents, EPA officials feared the press was onto the story, and in May 1980 the EPA announced the results publicly.

Residents were enraged. Government had refused to evacuate them, and now, many felt, they and their children would bear the genetic scars. When a pair of EPA representatives visited the neighborhood several days later, people found a focus for their rage and an angry crowd cornered the officials in the Homeowners Association headquarters, holding them "hostage" there for five hours. Researchers would later decide that the chromosomes of Love Canal residents were no more damaged than those of other Niagara Falls residents, but within five days of the EPA announcement, President Carter declared a second Love Canal emergency. A month before the 1980 presidential election, Carter traveled to Love Canal and signed an unprecedented agreement for the federal and state governments to buy out the hundreds of remaining homeowners. Once again, Love Canal decisions were being made on a campaign timetable.

After the buyout money came through, the only hitch was deciding just where the Love Canal neighborhood ended. State officials had never conceded the area was contaminated, and therefore they had no logical place to draw a boundary line. What they did have was an assessor's map used to satisfy earlier pleas for Love Canal tax relief, recalls Norman H. Nosenchuck, who headed New York's Love Canal cleanup efforts from 1978 through last year. "That's why the line goes down the middle of a stream, and that's why the line goes between two garages about three feet apart," Nosenchuck says. "There was no scientific basis to it."

The evacuation zone's northern boundary is Bergholtz Creek, which is contaminated with dioxin that escaped from Love Canal through storm sewers. Because the line runs down the middle of the creek, homeowners on the north bank were excluded from the government buyout, even though their side of the creek is just as contaminated as the side that is officially part of Love Canal.

The official boundary runs along Emmett Berard's property line, just yards from the living room chair where he sits in gray work clothes watching afternoon television. The line then dives into the creek behind his house and turns away, leaving the 63-year-old Berard ineligible for the government buyout that allowed his next-door neighbor to leave.

"You can't give the property away, just about," Berard says. Two years ago his doctor told him that he has bladder cancer. "I've got to wear a bag all the time," he says. "They should have at least given us the option to get out."

The politics of poisons

"It was a real nice neighborhood before this happened," says William D. Broderick. "We'd like it to still be." The tall, graying lawyer is leaning against one of two desks in what used to be a local storeowner's living room. Across the wall-to-wall carpet is a fireplace of tan brick; out the picture window

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behind him is a creek, no less picturesque for the dioxin in it.

Broderick works out of one of the pricier abandoned homes in the neighborhood. Why not? He is, after all, the lord of Love Canal. As head of the Love Canal Revitalization Agency, Broderick is responsible for the 463 houses the government bought after the 1980 emergency order. But he's not particularly happy about it. "We received money from the state and federal governments for buying the homes," he says, "but we didn't receive any money to maintain them."

Officials have always hoped to resell these homes, which they bought for $17.2 million, mostly in federal money. They figured that once residents left, they'd test the area for contamination and then decide whether it was safe to go into the real estate business. "This issue was supposed to have been decided by December of 1980," Broderick says. "It's almost as if they wanted the houses to deteriorate so they wouldn't have to make the decision."

The speculation is widely shared. If government decides the area is really safe, it is all but saying that the 1980 evacuation was unnecessary since the environmental conditions remain essentially the same. If it decides the area is unsafe, it is sending a disturbing message to the countless number of people who live around other dumps across the nation. "There are thousands of sites out there and all have homes with low levels of contaminants around them," says Gibbs. "Do they evacuate all those homes?"

Good question. Especially since policy-makers still know relatively little about the effects of living with hazardous waste dumps. Public health officials haven't even kept track of Love Canal residents, the nation's most celebrated dump victims, potentially squandering an opportunity not only to help them but also to guide decisions at other sites.

The New York state health department, which was in charge of studying the dump's effects, has defended its efforts. The department has said that Love Canal cancer rates seemed normal, though Paigen, the former cancer researcher, claims the agency's own statistics belie that. The department also has said there appeared to be no unusual rates of any other diseases. But the department did find that women living on the canal's southeast side had a high miscarriage rate. And despite official confidence that wastes were not escaping through swales, the department has said that children born in the swale areas had more birth defects than those in other sections. One department study also found that women in the swale areas had babies with low birth weights during the years that Hooker was dumping in the canal.

In the absense of ongoing studies, some Love Canal refugees have been keeping track of the former residents on their own. "Cancer has become so prominent," says Patricia Brown, whose 21-year-old daughter still has problems from the knee tumor she was born with. "Since January, within two blocks there have been five more cases." Kenny says eight of her former neighbors have had mastectomies. "One house had four dogs die of cancer," she adds.

Paigen has published two journal articles on Love Canal children, who she found were shorter than normal and suffered unusually high rates of seizures, hyperactivity, skin rashes, eye irritation, abdominal pain, incontinence, and learning problems. Paigen says some health problems, such as abdominal pain and seizures, seem to have cleared up after people left Love Canal.

Congress wanted the federal government to get a better handle on dumpsite health problems when it called for the establishment of the Agency for Toxic Substances Disease Registries as part of the 1980 Superfund law. But the Reagan administration dragged its heels and the agency didn't get off the ground until 1986; by October it expects to have identified the residents around only two of the nation's 951 Superfund sites. "There's just a dearth of information," said the agency's JeAnne Burg.

Superfund cleanups have progressed at only a slightly faster pace: since 1980, the EPA has finished with 13 dumps. Love Canal isn't among them. The dump itself was contained by December 1979, and environmental engineers say they've got it well under control. But they're still working on the contamination in the nearby streams and schoolyard. Engineers say they lack the technology to safely remove the chemicals in the actual dump. "I think the initial feeling with Love Canal and other sites was we could just go out and clean them up," says J. Winston Porter, who has headed the EPA's Superfund program for the past three years. "Now we know they're very unstructured, complex problems." Things bogged down as lawmakers fought it out with Rita Lavelle, one of Porter's predecessors, and Anne Burford over the EPA's cleanup efforts. And in 1985, Superfund just ran out of funds. Congress rejuvenated it the next year. "The program was kind of up, down, and sideways for four or five or six years," Porter says.

The courts have moved with equal slowness. Attorneys for the government are still preparing to go to trial over Love Canal, possibly in 1990. The case began in late 1979, but five months later the Justice Department put it on hold because it didn't have enough lawyers to handle it simultaneously with three others against Hooker and Occidental for other local dumps. The pretrial moratorium lasted four years, but the case has nevertheless generated a file

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of more than a half-million pages.

U.S. District Judge John T. Curtin has already ruled that the liability provisions of the 1980 Superfund law apply to Occidental, even though Hooker sold the dump in 1953. Occidental has countered that the local, state, and federal governments should absorb Love Canal's costs, arguing that the dump would not have leaked if it hadn't been disturbed by construction of streets, sewers, and the 99th Street School. And it challenges the wisdom of government actions, beginning with the 1978 evacuation. "The whole second emergency declaration was unnecessary," says Steven K. Yablonski, an attorney for Occidental.

Whatever the court outcome, it's unlikely to do much for folks like Nunzio LoVerdi, who recently moved out of the public housing complex after a long campaign to save it from demolition crews. The Niagara Falls Housing Authority plans to raze the $7 million complex this fall because it deteriorated during the years federal and state officials spent studying the neighborhood's safety.

Shortly before giving up the fight, LoVerdi visited the edge of the Love Canal field, near the brick leachate treatment building that filters waste oozing from the dump. It was the spot where then-candidate Al Gore was scheduled to speak, before his advance people spotted all those photogenic drums a little farther up the fence.

LoVerdi was unimpressed. "This is all we've had for 10 years," he said, "political promises and people coming here to use Love Canal." □

THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY
Journalism Award

for May 1988 is presented to

Chicago Tribune

Chicago public schools administrator Manford Byrd Jr. earns $110,000 a year and calls himself "probably the most gifted urban administrator in this country." But his school system has some of the nation's lowest test scores and Byrd says he has no idea why. He should check the *Tribune*'s two-week series for some answers: a bloated, leaderless bureaucracy, a selfish teachers union, and an indifferent legislature. Classrooms went without books and supplies while the school board built a private bathroom for a "field superintendent." The *Tribune*'s series captures both the drama of inner-city schools, which serve as holding pens for the city's poor, and the bureaucratic forces responsible.

for June 1988 is presented to

William Saletan
American Politics

Who got the most votes in the Iowa caucuses? Astonishingly, no one knows. The caucuses involve a Byzantine system of minimum thresholds, multiple ballots, and weighted districts. To shortcut this impure exercise in democracy, the networks attempted to learn who got the most votes on the first ballot, a truer indication of a candidate's popularity as the campaign conducts its first real vote. They employed the National Election Service to monitor this "real" vote in each of the state's 2,500 precincts. But the NES sent high school kids with no training to count heads in crowded rooms. Saletan reports that some didn't even show up and others "freaked out and left." The networks reported their unreliable tally and declared Richard Gephardt the winner, though Paul Simon may in fact have out-polled him. Gephardt then leapt 10 points in the New Hampshire polls, passing Simon for good. Network officials, who cling to their numbers like Vietnam generals to body counts, still discount the possibility of error.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper, magazine, television, or radio story (or series of stories) on our political system. Nominations for any newspaper, magazine, or radio or television station in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation.

The award for stories published or aired in July will be announced in the October issue. Nominations for stories published or aired in August will close September 15. The winner will be announced in the November issue. Two copies of the article or broadcast text should accompany the nomination.

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TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES

THE CASE FOR POLYESTER

[illegible] in the *Chicago Tribune* boasts that "wearing [illegible] is like eating Godiva chocolate, drinking Crystal champagne, sleeping Davidoff sheets, driving a Porsche GTO, or eating pasta at the California Pizza Kitchen."

[illegible] WANT TO BE CONSTITUTIONALLY [illegible]

[illegible] passed a $1.0 million bill to keep the Chicago White Sox from [illegible] to Sarasota, Florida. [illegible] Illinois Department of Revenue [illegible] to capitalists [illegible] Sox [illegible] Sarasota. [illegible] for [illegible] Sox [illegible] $500 million.

WHY SHRINK TO [illegible]

[illegible] Sarasota [illegible] Sox [illegible] the business of $500 million.

BACK TO BASICS

[illegible] at Sarah Lawrence State University, said of his course, Variations in Human Sexuality: "Most of the students come in here thinking classes like this are easy. They know the difference after this class."

MENSA HAS FILED SUIT

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BY CAMP BEVERLY HILLS®

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Marshall Field's

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The Navy Museum's exhibit [illegible] waterproof [illegible] keeping dress [illegible] Gulf [illegible]

WHY NOT CLOSE PLAYGROUNDS TOO?

Pomberton [illegible] New Jersey [illegible] has ordered [illegible] to remove [illegible] swings, [illegible] because [illegible] children [illegible]

[illegible] THAT MEN ARE [illegible] MORE LIKELY TO SEAN

A PhD student at [illegible] is writing a thesis [illegible] on the [illegible] of men in the [illegible] female restrooms.

IN THE TRADITION [illegible]

[illegible] Sarah's [illegible] Lawrence [illegible] whether the [illegible] history used in the Strange Days [illegible] are [illegible]

TAKE IT TO THE BEACH

In a recent review of the book [illegible] wrote that it [illegible] black humor revenge [illegible] to do [illegible] dead [illegible] reading.

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Flint's Fight to the Finish

GM was trying to KO Honda and Toyota. It wound up in a courtroom with Flint and Saginaw.

by Roger Kerson

"They don't want to be raped anymore," says Michael Shapiro, his voice tight with anger. "They are saying, 'You raped us before, but you can't do it anymore. There will be no more raping.' "

Shapiro's plan for rape prevention does not include better street lighting, quicker police response, or karate lessons for women. His particular brand of jujitsu is practiced in a courtroom, not on a wrestling mat. And the "rape" victims he's talking about are some of the largest corporations in America—including the giant General Motors Corporation.

For the past six years, Shapiro has been suing Michigan cities and townships on behalf of the nation's number one automaker, demanding dramatic cuts in property tax payments. GM is issuing tax challenges in 20 Michigan communities, protesting the tax on 36 of the 65 manufacturing and warehouse facilities that it operates in the state. In doing so, the company is locking horns with local governments in battles that will cost millions of dollars and involve some of the best legal talent money can buy.

GM isn't the first Michigan company to sue for lower taxes. In 1983, Shapiro won a $32 million judgment for Ford against the city of Dearborn, and he has also sued the city of Portage on behalf of the Upjohn pharmaceutical company. GM itself has filed similar suits against cities in Ohio and New York. But it's unprecedented for a company like GM—which has long been the anchor of the Michigan economy—to dispute the values of so many properties in so many different parts of a state that has served as its home for 75 years.

The stakes in these cases, which often take years to complete, are enormous. If GM wins, it receives an annual reduction in its property tax bill and a hefty refund—plus interest—for excess taxes paid in years past, dating back to the first year the appeal was filed. The city of Flint, for example, could wind up owing GM as much as $70 million if the company wins in court. The city of Pontiac could get hit with a bill of more than $50 million.

Numbers like those tend to get people's attention, and Michigan Treasurer Robert Bowman has taken the unusual step of providing state funds to local communities to help finance their legal battles. Because GM has vastly superior resources, he says, cities and townships might not have had a fair chance to present their case without some outside help.

"We had a philosophical concern—that money should not buy justice," Bowman says. A former Wall Street whiz kid who served in the Carter Treasury Department and played a key role in rescuing Chrysler from bankruptcy, Bowman is not especially comfortable in the role of corporate critic. Stepping gingerly around GM, he says he has no firsthand information but that he's been told that the company's strategy is "to drag these things out,

Roger Kerson is a Chicago writer.

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churn out billable hours, until the community cries uncle.

"We do want a fair fight," he says, "and you don't have to be an MBA to see that it wasn't going to be a fair fight."

GM's effort to slash its taxes comes at a particularly bad time in Michigan because the company has also been cutting back its work force due to increased foreign competition and a loss of market share to domestic rivals Ford and Chrysler.

In November 1986, GM announced plans to close 11 factories, and six of them were in Michigan. The company laid off a total of 29,000 workers, 17,000 from its home state. Since then, the news from GM has only gotten worse. Battered by a 20 percent drop in sales between 1985 and 1987, and an ever-shrinking market share, the company has aggressively pursued a policy of planned shrinkage, announcing more and more layoffs. Exacerbating the resentment of Michigan residents, GM has expanded its overseas operations in South Korea and Mexico. As of April 1987, according to *The Detroit News*, no fewer than 50,000 Michigan workers had been told that they would no longer be GM people by the end of 1989.

Nearly 30,000 of the GM layoffs announced so far in Michigan have taken place along the so-called "I-75 strip," an industrial belt that stretches from the northern Detroit suburbs, past Pontiac, then Flint, and up to the mid-Michigan cities of Saginaw and Bay City.

Flint used to be GM's flagship city. These days, it is a picture of urban decline, a city of abandoned homes and boarded-up stores. Its last major development was a theme park called "Autoworld." Envisioned as a celebration of the American automobile, the park opened in 1984 with the help of $25 million in public funds. A million people a year were expected to pay $9 a head to see rides and movies about cars in one of America's great car cities and also to walk along a replica of downtown Flint before all the stores got boarded up. The expected visitors never arrived and it closed six months later. Flint city officials are still racking their brains to find someone to take it off their hands.

As it happens, Flint, Pontiac, and Saginaw—three of the cities hit hardest by GM layoffs—are also three of the biggest targets of GM's property tax appeals. Saying they feared high interest penalties if the city lost, Saginaw officials agreed to give the automaker a 31 percent tax reduction over three years. Flint and Pontiac are still planning to fight GM in court. These industrial cities find themselves in a very unhappy predicament: at the same time that GM layoffs have added to the need for public services, GM's tax appeals raise the prospect of slashed revenues.

Michael Shapiro says that's not his problem. "My focus," he says, "is on each individual case, to make sure my client is paying the right amount of tax. . . .That's all I can focus on."

In an age of corporate belt-tightening and industrial decline, the Michigan tax battle is an important symbol of how corporations and communities too often fight one another instead of working together on issues that might be of mutual benefit.

Delta's bare backside

GM officials argue that local governments have been setting their property taxes too high since as early as the 1960s. The cumulative effect of a series of small overcharges, they say, is a whopping overassessment. But for years, the tax staff in Detroit couldn't convince local plant managers to confront the problem. "People who were operating local plants felt it was more important that they not impair relations with the local community," said Michael Mack, GM's director of state and local taxes, "which would certainly happen when they started filing appeals."

In 1981, however, the company posted a $762 million operating loss—the first time in GM's history it had ever failed to make a profit. The company's internal calculus changed, and the conflict between the need for good relations with the community and the need to cut costs grew sharper. "Corporate management issued a directive," Mack said, "directing all units and operations to look for every possible way to cut costs." The property tax situation, he says, immediately "came to mind to those of us on the tax staff."

Mack said it was hard to convince local managers to go along. "We had to show that the cost savings would be worth the difficulty that this kind of thing poses," he said. Whether or not the local managers are convinced is hard to know, since GM won't allow its local plant managers to talk to the press about tax appeals.

Once Mack and his fellow tax staffers were released from internal constraints, they began to take on the local governments that had been frustrating them for years. In 1982, appeals against seven communities were filed with the Michigan Tax Tribunal and thrown out on technicalities. Seven appeals were filed again in 1983 and 1984, then 13 more were added to the list in 1985. Had GM won all 20 cases, it would have saved about $50 million a year. For a company that made $3.5 billion in 1987, that's the equivalent of a week's profits.

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Town elders say the court battle with GM made David and Goliath look evenly matched. "At least David had a slingshot," one town official said.

GM's tax battles are part of a national trend, says Rich Alney, director of the Chicago-based International Association of Assessment Officers. In recent years, he says, there has been a fundamental change in the way corporations relate to the communities in which they do business. "It used to be that large corporations were reluctant to vigorously appeal assessments," he says, because they felt they should support local government to the fullest extent possible. But in the grueling global marketplace of the 1980s, he says, "more and more businesses are looking at their assessments with scrutiny," a trend he sees reaching far beyond GM and Michigan. In fact, he says, "I'm not quite sure how the GM cases got so much publicity."

If GM wins, it will almost certainly lead either to higher taxes for other taxpayers or fewer services—or both. City assessors and the public interest groups that have backed them in their fight against GM say the rise in taxes for a typical homeowner could range from $85 a year in Warren to $363 in Pontiac.

Because of the long delays—which the localities say are caused mostly by GM's refusal to provide them with needed information about the disputed properties—only one case has been heard so far. GM dropped one of the appeals, and nine cities or townships have voluntarily agreed to reduce GM's taxes in order to avoid costly legal battles. That leaves nine communities still fighting GM in court. The Comstock case, first on the list for trial, began on June 13 and is still being argued before the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

Fighting GM in court can be a very expensive proposition. City officials in Flint expect to spend between $3 and $4 million to defend their case. The city of Warren will spend more than $2 million, and tiny Comstock Township has already spent more than $1 million. Genessee Township has put its legal preparations on hold, hoping that the issues in the case will be resolved by the Comstock and Flint trials. "It would cost us $2 million to defend against GM," says William Ayre, the supervisor of Genessee Township. "So either way we lose." Town elders say the first court battle between GM and its tax-levying foes made David and Goliath look evenly matched. "At least David had a slingshot," Ayre has quipped.

"You have a responsibility to be correct in your assessment," counters J. David Hudgens, GM's spokesman. "When someone challenges you, it isn't kosher to say you can't afford to defend it. You've made the assessment, and you'd better be prepared."

In the first case that went to trial, Delta Township, which houses a GM warehouse, was not well prepared, and GM won more than $1 million in back taxes. GM's victory came after a withering cross-examination by Shapiro that completely destroyed the credibility of Delta's single expert witness, an appraiser named Donald Treadwell Jr.

The court record is almost painful to read. As soon as he took the witness stand, Treadwell admitted to a number of mathematical errors in his appraisal report, and it was all downhill from there. Shapiro ran circles around the hapless Treadwell, punching so many holes in his logic and arithmetic that his report was rendered utterly useless. In its September 1986 decision, the Tax Tribunal described Treadwell as "misinformed" and "hopelessly confused."

"I like to think," Shapiro says, "that I had something to do with that."

During the hearing, Leo Goldstein, the attorney hired by Delta Township, complained about GM's legal firepower. "I look over there and I see half a dozen experts standing around," he told the judges. "I look over here and I haven't got anyone even covering my backside."

In looking for a legal champion, GM chose well. Shapiro is an attorney at Honigman, Miller, Schwartz, and Cohn, a partnership with more than

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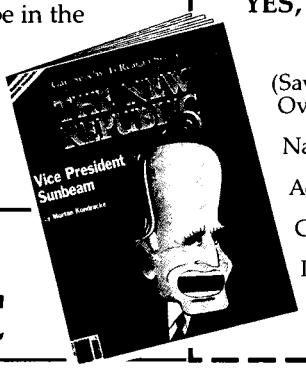

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

THE MINDS THAT MATTER

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90 attorneys and offices in Detroit, Lansing, West Palm Beach, and Boca Raton. It is widely viewed as one of the most influential firms in Michigan, with a switch-hitting capability that extends into both political parties. Jason Honigman, the 83-year-old founder of the firm, is a leading Republican fundraiser. George S. Romney, son of Michigan's former GOP governor, is a partner. They keep Democrats in their bullpen, too. Avern Cohn was an important fundraiser for Michigan Democrats before he was appointed to the federal bench by Jimmy Carter in 1979.

Shapiro insists that he is not outspending the cities and townships he is fighting in court, but neither he nor GM will disclose actual figures for legal expenses. One attorney familiar with the case, however, says that Shapiro's time costs $250 an hour, while the lawyers hired by localities are charging in the $100 or $150 range. In the Delta Township case, the township spent $75,000 for legal counsel and for Treadwell, the expert decimated by Shapiro. GM had three experts in that case, and one of them testified he spent between 800 and 1,000 hours developing his testimony. If he was paid $50 an hour—a conservative estimate—that represents an expense of between $40,000 and $50,000 for him alone.

Shaggy dogs and gremlins

Shapiro's success in court doesn't depend solely on his ability to outspend his adversaries. He brings to these cases a real estate appraisal theory based on the argument that aging industrial property in rust belt states isn't worth what it used to be. In many cases, he argues, it isn't worth very much at all.

Real estate assessment is less a science than an art. Subjective judgments are involved in determining the value of a large industrial property. This differs from appraising the value of say, a three-bedroom house, where appraisers can simply compare the sale values of similar properties. Unlike houses, big automobile plants don't get bought and sold every day. To determine their value, appraisers calculate the cost of replacing them with new facilities. And if the new facilities would be cheaper to operate, Shapiro argues, then the taxes on the old ones should be reduced.

The attorneys opposing Shapiro in court, however, dispute the way he applies the theory. City and township officials agree that industrial plants can become less and less valuable over time, and gradual reductions in assessments are not uncommon. But in its appeals, GM is claiming that its plants are worth anywhere from 30 percent to 85 percent less than the values they have been assigned on the tax rolls. Okay, say local officials, some of these factories may be dogs—but they aren't that damn shaggy. In Genessee Township, where GM owns an auto parts plant, the company has demanded a $1.2 million reduction in its annual tax bill, which is at present $1.5 million.

The most striking example is GM's assembly plant in Orion Township, a small community outside the city of Pontiac. When the plant opened in 1983, GM chairman Roger Smith described it and a sister plant in Missouri as "the two most modern auto assembly plants in the world." Just four months later, GM's lawyers were appearing before city officials in Orion to argue that its value on the tax rolls should be reduced by 40 percent.

"I guess gremlins got in there to make it obsolete," says JoAnn Van Tassel, supervisor of Orion Township. "If you listen to them, they say if we had it to do over again, we wouldn't build it so large... They put two additions onto that plant while they were constructing it. How can I have too much space in 1984, but add on to it in 1982 and 1983?"

But Shapiro—whose ideas have brought home $32 million for Ford against Dearborn and $1 million for GM against Delta Township—scoffs at his adversaries. "They haven't won one yet," he says, and predicts victory in the upcoming suit against Flint.

"Flint is an easy case," Shapiro says. "They're assessing at $30 a square foot," a figure he claims is way too high for pre-World War II industrial property.

Shapiro is a very precise man, but his figures on tax assessments in Flint are not even close to correct. GM has five pieces of industrial property in Flint, and, according to city assessor Frank Moss, none of them are assessed at anywhere near $30 per square foot. Flint's 30-year-old Buick plant is assessed at $12.70 a square foot. The 40-year-old Chevrolet factory is valued at $7.59. And the recently closed Fisher Body facility, 47 years old, was assessed at $3.31 per square foot.

Hudgens and other GM spokesmen frequently tell the press that its tax appeals are necessary because the company is paying between "$25 and $70" per square foot on "older industrial properties." But a look at a comprehensive list of GM's tax assessments in Michigan, also provided by Frank Moss, shows there are no old buildings—not a single one—assessed at $70 a square foot. Some GM properties under appeal do have some higher assessments, but these properties are not aging, decrepit facilities. In fact, GM's so-called "dinosaurs," its 40- and 50-year-old plants, are typically assessed at between $7 and $18 per square foot—about 25 percent of the

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figures that Hudgens quotes.

No one in government wants to see his budget cut, and not surprisingly the GM appeals have municipal officials gnashing their teeth at the prospect of sizable cuts in revenues and services. "I'm having sleepless nights over this thing," says Joe Van Bruggen, supervisor of Comstock Township, where GM is seeking a 72 percent reduction of its tax payments. The appeal is now in its fifth year, and if GM wins its case Van Bruggen will have to slash his $1 million a year budget by about $136,000—and come up with more than a half million dollars to repay GM for five years of back taxes. If Comstock voters decided to raise their own taxes and keep the services, Van Bruggen estimates it would cost the average homeowner about $161 per year.

Michigan's jilted suitors

That GM and these towns are fighting at all would have seemed shocking a generation ago.

"I'm disappointed," says Ayre, the supervisor of Genessee Township. "We always had a good relationship." Over the years, he says, the township spent considerable money to help GM, "on roads, fire, extra police protection, that sort of thing." Streets got paved that wouldn't otherwise have been, Ayre said, "so trucks could get into the plant."

The fight has become a Michigan *Rashomon* story, with each side offering a different eyewitness account. Ayre says he is especially unhappy about GM's method of negotiating a new tax assessment. The company first demanded a 25 percent decrease, he says, and the township, trying to avoid a long legal battle, offered 22.5 percent.

"Then," he says, "they asked for 30 percent." When the township came back with another offer, Ayre says, GM promptly demanded a 50 percent reduction, and by the time the matter wound up before the Tax Tribunal the company was looking for an 85 percent cut. But when presented with that scenario, Hudgens denies it. "We don't do business that way," he said.

Even the Michigan legislature, usually a stronghold of support for the state's largest industry, has entered the fray—not to mediate, but to fuel the legal fire. The state treasurer's decision to allocate funds to two of the communities fighting GM in court had to be approved by the appropriations committees both in the state House of Representatives, which has a Democratic majority, and in the Senate, which is controlled by Republicans.

What's that? Republican senators in Michigan voting to use state funds to fight General Motors? Incredible as it sounds, it's true. The legislature has approved the measure twice, once for Comstock and a second time for Flint. (However, a package of bills that would have made it easier for assessors to get information from large industrial taxpayers has stalled thanks to an aggressive effort by the Michigan Chamber of Commerce.)

Feeling like jilted suitors, many Michigan communities are responding with a new scrutiny of all aspects of GM taxation, looking for new ways to increase GM's tax bill.

In Warren, where GM is challenging the assessment on its sprawling Technical Center complex, the city assessor's staff conducted an extensive survey of the property in order to prepare its case before the Tax Tribunal. Mayor Ronald Bonkowski said they discovered that GM has constructed tens of thousands of square feet of building improvements—walls, tunnels, offices, cellars—without ever bothering to apply for city construction permits. Not only does that violate city ordinances but it also means that the new property never showed up on city tax rolls—a situation that Bonkowski plans to remedy very soon.

And there's even a new battleground: further challenge to GM may come over the issue of tax abatements. Michigan has a 1974 law that allows local communities to grant 12-year tax breaks to companies building new plants or rehabilitating old ones. Between 1975 and 1986, GM was granted abatements on about $4 billion worth of property, saving the company more than $115 million on its annual tax bill—more than twice what it set out to save by its current property tax campaign. In order to apply for these abatements, the company has to promise that it would keep or create jobs in the communities that were granting the tax relief.

Between 1976 and 1986, for example, GM was granted abatements on $1.3 billion worth of property in Flint; but during that time the city lost 18,000 GM jobs. Groups there and elsewhere are considering lawsuits to recover lost tax revenues or enforce job guarantees.

Meanwhile, GM is having a harder time getting new tax abatements. In December 1987, Orion Township became the first Michigan municipality ever to turn down a GM request for a tax abatement. In March of this year, Detroit became the second.

This new get-tough attitude on the part of local governments could cost GM millions of dollars, perhaps more than the giant automaker will ever save as a result of its tax appeals. There once was a time when GM could get whatever it wanted from local officials in Michigan. That era of innocence is over. □

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State of New Jersey
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APRIL 7, 1988

MEMORANDUM

TO: THE STAFF
FROM: WALTER N. READ, CHAIRMAN
SUBJECT: GRIFFIN VISIT

I'm certain that the office grapevine has informed everyone that Merv Griffin and some members of his staff will visit the Commission office on April 14 at 10:30 A.M.

Mr. Griffin will be visiting here as a potential casino license applicant and it would be inappropriate and unprofessional for the members of this staff to intrude upon his time by requesting autographs or photographs.

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The African Killing Fields

You heard all about the Ethiopian famine. Here's the story that President Reagan, relief groups, and the media didn't tell you.

by Robert D. Kaplan

In 1984 and 1985, the American media saturated the public with stories about the famine in Ethiopia. Television footage of starving children made a deep imprint on the American audience, causing a flood of relief aid. However, while the amount of American coverage was impressive, the depth of treatment was not. The American media, in fact, dealt with only a thin slice of reality in Ethiopia, a country riven by ethnic conflict that was going through a bloody transition to a communist system.

The media told us little of the war between the Ethiopian government and the Eritrean and Tigrean guerrillas in the northern part of the country, even though it was taking place in the middle of the famine zone and was being fought on a larger scale and for a longer period of time than any other war in Africa. (Since 1961, the Eritreans have sought independence from the government; the government has fought to keep Eritrea, its only outlet to the sea, from seceding.) In the years preceding the famine, more soldiers died in northern Ethiopia than in either Central America or Lebanon. And it was war, as much as drought, that caused the famine in the first place.

Forced resettlement of Ethiopian ethnic minorities was an important element in the communist regime's war against the guerrillas. So was the destruction of tribal farming systems and the regrouping of millions of farmers into state collectives. Since 1980 the number of blacks who died at the hands of security forces in South Africa has been numerically insignificant compared to the number killed by the Ethiopian authorities by the force of collectivization—and this figure does not include famine deaths. Yet, with a few exceptions the media put relatively little effort into investigating this story.

Equally disturbing was the ambivalence of President Reagan on this important issue. What communists were doing in Ethiopia was far more horrible than what communists were doing in Angola or Nicaragua. But while other administration officials

Robert D. Kaplan is a journalist based in Athens. This article is adapted from his book, Surrender or Starve: The Wars Behind the Ethiopian Famine, *which is being published this month by Westview Press.* © 1988 by Robert D. Kaplan.

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frequently criticized the regime in the strongest possible terms, President Reagan himself was practically silent.

A communist regime brutally uprooted its own citizens against their will, forcibly separating hundreds of thousands from their families and killing tens of thousands through deliberate mistreatment. But the impact of this cataclysm on the media, a conservative White House, and the American public was minimal.

Rather than a catastrophe, the famine was a godsend for this regime. The famine created a pool of millions of peasants who, whatever their political leanings, now had no choice but to rely on the government for help. The government now had a legitimate excuse to relocate those it thought to be hostile, as well as the wherewithal to do it, partly because of relief supplies pouring in from the West.

Not only did the resettlement program destroy the livelihoods of peasants in the north but the program destroyed those in the south, too. Many of the new sites in fact had been successfully farmed for years before the indigenous inhabitants had their land expropriated by the state to make way for the new arrivals. The rationale for the seemingly irrational act was military and political: most of the sites were located along access routes used by the Oromo Liberation Front in its war against the government. Thus, not only would the Tigrean rebels in the north be deprived of their base of peasant support but so would the Oromo rebels in the south. Moving people around became another way to prosecute a war.

Prisoners on Soviet planes

Woldeselassie Gebremariam, a Tigrean priest in his late thirties, was one of 50 Ethiopian refugees interviewed in March 1985 at a camp in eastern Sudan by Peter Niggli of the Swiss church group Berliner Missionwerk. Woldeselassie's village was in the area held by the TPLF, the Tigrean Peoples Liberation Front, fighting the Ethiopian regime.

Woldeselassie told Niggli: "A cattle plague broke out last fall (1984) in the whole region. . . .The government announced it was going to vaccinate all the cattle free of charge at Adwa (in the north-central part of the province). . . .We rounded up 750 head of cattle in our village and started off."

Woldeselassie, expecting to return home in a few days, left his wife and three children back in his village. This was about the time that a *Newsday* report (December 9, 1984) entitled, "New Start for Chosen Few" by Josh Friedman, indicated that a number of resettlement abuses, including forced separation of families, had ended.

"We arrived in Adwa on December 6 (1984) and were surrounded by soldiers in the middle of the town." (Woldeselassie explained how the soldiers picked out the youngest and the strongest of the peasants and took them to prison.) "We shouted 'Who was going to take care of our cattle?'. . .They answered that it would be no loss if we lost our cattle, the government was going to resettle us and would replace our cattle in the new settlement."

For food, the prisoners were given two pieces of bread a day. The soldiers reportedly ate from grain bags, whose markings indicated they had been donated by the European Economic Commission and the governments of Canada and West Germany. On the eleventh day, Soviet pilots transported Woldeselassie and the others from Adwa to Makelle by helicopter. They couldn't go by land because the countryside in between was controlled by the TPLF.

"We were kept in an open field. There was no shade during the day and no shelter from cold at night." Others at the camp explained how on account of catastrophic sanitary conditions, people fell ill with diarrhea and vomiting. Many died. But when foreigners, including journalists, visited near the camp, the Tigreans were temporarily moved elsewhere.

Soviet-made Antonovs, provided by the Soviet Union and Libya, were used in the operation to move Woldeselassie and the other prisoners to the capital of Addis Ababa. The planes, whose unpressurized cargo bays were designed for 50 paratroopers, carried 300-350 people on each flight. As Woldeselassie and many others described it, the sick people were laid on the floor in the middle of the plane, then the healthier ones were packed in. At Bole airport in Addis Ababa, troops carried off the dead bodies, and a fire brigade hosed out the pool of vomit and piss from the floor of the plane.

Although water was not scarce, the peasants were given only one cup of water each before being packed tightly onto buses for the long journey to Welega, a province in western Ethiopia astride the border with Sudan.

The jungly no-man's-land was near Asosa, a town about 25 miles from the Sudanese border. Woldeselassie said that no food was provided for two days after his group had arrived. Woldeselassie was fortunate, however. After one failed escape, he succeeded in reaching Sudan, where Niggli interviewed him.

Resettlement was simply an interesting sideshow to the main famine story when Niggli, along with Bonnie K. Holcomb and Dr. Jason W. Clay of the research group Cultural Survival, arrived in Sudan in February 1985 to interview those who had

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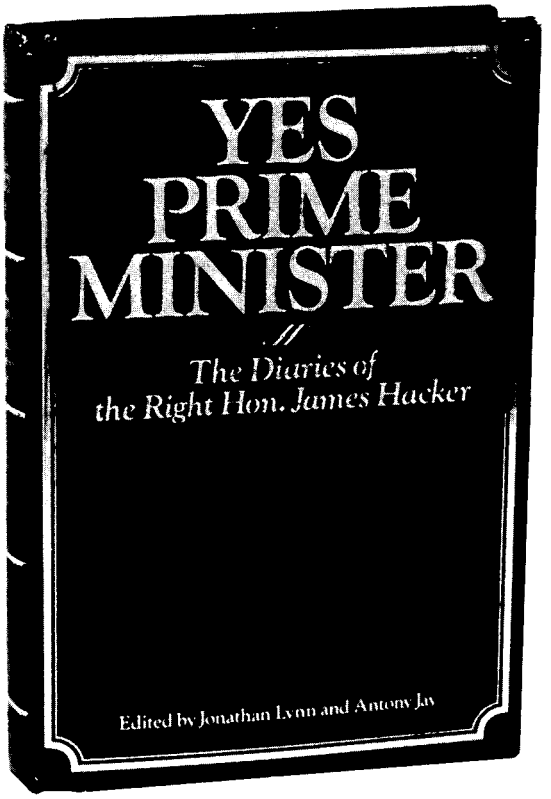
When James Hacker was merely a cabinet minister, you laughed.



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escaped. Western journalists and diplomats in Ethiopia had caught glimpses of people being herded into trucks and airplanes. One U.S. diplomat went so far as to say that "the selection process recalled Auschwitz." But there the issue ground to a halt for lack of evidence. Resettlement areas were off limits to all foreigners except those on prearranged tours to model camps. The government denied that the program was not voluntary or that it was motivated by any factor besides the humanitarian desire to relocate drought-stricken peasants to more fertile areas in the west and southwest of the country. Western relief officials stationed in Addis Ababa, whose presence depended on the goodwill of the local authorities, tended to back up the regime's assertions. The obfuscations no doubt influenced Friedman's *Newsday* article, as well as a report aired April 1, 1985 on ABC's "World News Tonight" by correspondent Lou Cioffi, who depicted resettlement as a necessary evil:

"Despite all the accusations, the government is going ahead with resettlement. The land in the north is dry and dead, nothing grows there. In the south it is rich and fertile. There is plenty of water. In this camp with proper irrigation, they can grow two crops a year. . . .This settlement [near Jimma] had become for them a showcase, a demonstration that despite difficulties the resettlement program can be made to work. . . . As for the settlers, there are personal problems. Many are homesick, others are concerned about families they left behind. . . .This massive movement of almost one-and-a-half million people will not be easy. But even those Western officials who are critical of the program admit there may be no other way."

Jimma, as it turned out, was one of the camps about which Cultural Survival had obtained first-hand information concerning massive human rights abuse.

Cultural Survival, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, came to Sudan with especially impressive credentials. Founded in 1972 by a group of social scientists at Harvard University, its reports on endangered ethnic groups in Africa, Asia, and Latin America have criticized right-wing and left-wing governments alike and have been utilized by the World Bank, USAID, and foreign governments to judge a country's human rights record. Clay's team interviewed 277 Ethiopian refugees at six sites in eastern Sudan. All interviews were taped and then translated a second time by other translators back in the United States. More than half those interviewed were selected at random and, in almost all cases, involved more than 5 percent of the total population of each camp. This was a statistically huge sample. (Harris polls, for instance, rely on .0004 of 1 percent of the U.S. population.)

For the two months that they were in Sudan, Niggli, Holcomb, and Clay went about their business quietly and didn't socialize with the crowd of journalists and relief workers in Khartoum. A year later, when the results of their research were being hotly discussed, few could even remember them.

By the time Clay and his team completed their work in Sudan at the end of March 1985, between 300,000-400,000 peasants from the north of Ethiopia had been resettled, according to the authorities in Addis Ababa. From a strictly scientific point of view, as Clay admitted to me, his findings could not claim to provide a wholly accurate picture of what was happening to those still in Ethiopia because the Ethiopian refugees in Sudan may not have been representative of those who were resettled. Clay said, however, "The information that we collected was so similar on so many fronts, that it has to be taken seriously," regarding the present situation inside Ethiopia.

Spineless aid

To my knowledge, no study of the Great Leap Forward in China or the actions of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia was as well packaged as was Cultural Survival's *Politics and the Ethiopian Famine 1984-1985*, a 250-page monograph, served up with an array of attractive maps. If you could wade through the overwhelming details—few could—they were absolutely devastating.

"All those interviewed insisted that they had been captured by government troops and forced to resettle. . . ," the report said. "Ten percent of all those interviewed reported that they witnessed people being killed who tried to escape." More than 40 percent said they were beaten. More than 85 percent said they had been separated from at least one member of their immediate families. Amete Gebremedhin, a Tigrean in her early forties, stated that after she and a group of other captured women protested to the militia about being separated from their husbands and children, "the soldiers laughed and said: 'What do you care about your children, you will find new ones in Asosa.' "

Some of the peasants were held in proper feeding camps, accessible to Western journalists. But "only the meek, quiet people were allowed to see the journalists. Group leaders and known resisters were moved out of camp areas where journalists were permitted to roam." In one case, an Ethiopian government official announced that "white guests are coming. . . .Whether you speak positively or negatively

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we will translate positively to the journalists." Another Tigrean, Haili Kelela, claimed that in front of a group of "white people" who had arrived in "a white car with a red cross painted on it," he and seven others told party cadres that they didn't want to be resettled. The cadres assured them that "we will give you food...and lead you back to your village." But after the "white people" had left, he and the others were thrown in prison and beaten until "I had to vomit blood."

Everyone interviewed said people had died en route to the resettlement sites. Clay's analysis of the death figures was the most comprehensive and the most controversial part of his research.

His figure of 50,000 to 100,000 dead set the aid communities in Khartoum and Addis Ababa ablaze. It was a higher death rate than at the emergency feeding camps on the Sudanese border at the height of the famine, and most of the Ethiopians who perished in Sudan were children and old people—of which there were very few in the resettlement program.

Father Jack Finucane, the head of Concern, an Irish aid group in Addis Ababa, saw the death rates in an article I wrote for *The Wall Street Journal* about Cultural Survival's report. He told a group of 60 foreign aid workers assembled on October 19, 1985 at the headquarters of RRC, the relief agency of the Ethiopian government, "I've read it and I don't believe it." Finucane said that in visits he and other members of Concern made to the resettlement area, there were no indications of any such horrors. But as it turned out, one month earlier, at a private meeting at the Hilton Hotel where only Western ambassadors and some aid officials were present, Finucane told a different tale: about a half million people were being displaced in "horrible conditions." Of 77 resettlement areas, only two or three had succeeded, he said. In a July 29, 1985 letter to his home office, Finucane wrote it was safe to assume that 25 percent—or 125,000—of the settlers had died.

Finucane's reversal, whereby he independently confirmed the main points of Cultural Survival's Sudan-based research, only to deny it all at a public forum in the presence of Ethiopian officials, was laid out in a November 3, 1985 article by David Blundy in the *Sunday Times* (of London). When Blundy, then one of the paper's leading foreign correspondents, asked the chair of the Band Aid coordinating committee in Addis Ababa, Brother Augustus O'Keefe, about the discrepancy, O'Keefe replied, "That was a private meeting [the meeting between Finucane and the ambassadors]. I won't talk about it. The press have done a lot of damage here. I have never heard about any problems with resettlement."

It was a familiar pattern: back up the research of Cultural Survival and Berliner Missionswerk, the Swiss relief group, in private, but condemn it in public—lest they be expelled from the country. The Red Cross League, for example, did a study on resettlement in the summer of 1985 that corroborated much of what Clay's resettlement study had found, including the death rate. But the report was kept secret.

The spinelessness of the aid community in Addis Ababa was demonstrated a few months later, in December 1985, when the inevitable happened—one of their own went public about the appalling consequences of resettlement. Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF), a French relief group, published a report entitled, "Mass Deportation in Ethiopia," alleging that with a death rate of 20 percent, as many as 300,000 people were likely to die in the resettlement program, of which up to 100,000 already had. The report noted that "one of the most massive violations of human rights" was "being carried out with funds and gifts from international aid." The French group quickly was expelled from Ethiopia, while the rest of the aid community chastised the group for getting involved in "politics" when it should have been keeping its nose to the grindstone of relief work. The kiss of death to the French group's presence in Ethiopia was administered by the United Nations, which publicly defended resettlement by saying that the French organization's charges could not be taken seriously because it was the only group in the field making such accusations.

The missing *New York Times*

In early 1986, MSF took its case to the court of U.S. public opinion, which barely paid attention even though the United States was providing almost as much aid to Ethiopia as was the rest of the world combined. A Washington press conference, among other activities, got the French doctors onto the front page of *The New York Times* for a day and into the editorial pages of several important dailies. But the story had difficulty making the evening news on the major networks because there was no footage of the settlers being abused. Also, this was the period of the Challenger disaster. Therefore, the impact of MSF's revelation on the general public was marginal. The daily news media, by this time obsessed with the southern part of the African continent, did little to put the findings into perspective or to investigate the matter further. The editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal* was a constant exception to this rule, but like all opinion pages, it didn't have

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quite the credibility of a hard news section, and the page's conservative slant meant that liberals often distrusted it.

A breakthrough of sorts occurred in early March 1986, after Blaine Harden of *The Washington Post* and Charles Powers of the *Los Angeles Times* visited a Damazin refugee camp. The refugees on whom Cultural Survival's study was based were at Damazin for months in 1985, but few members of the media had bothered to interview them. Even after Clay and Holcomb's report was published, journalists tended to write about the skeptical reaction in the relief community rather than to hunt down the actual victims in order to hear firsthand accounts. Harden had planned to do this, but as he explained to me, "I had a whole continent to cover and after several straight months in Ethiopia and Sudan, just as I heard about the Damazin story, I had to do a stint in West Africa." By the time Harden was able to return to Sudan, the refugees had been scattered to other locations, but another group of about one thousand had arrived from Ethiopia, and this group had been through an experience that was far more horrible than the experience of the people whom Clay, Niggli, and Holcomb had interviewed. As Harden wrote in his story, which ran March 11, 1986 in the *International Herald Tribune*:

"The dismal odyssey of the young Ethiopian mother began last spring with a false promise of free food in the Ethiopian government resettlement program. . . . En route, she said she was forced by Ethiopian soldiers to abandon her two children. She said she watched her husband die of disease in an overcrowded transit camp. After fleeing Ethiopia, she said, she was robbed, beaten, raped and held as a slave by Sudanese rebel soldiers."

The rebels belonged to the Ethiopian-backed Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which was at war with the Khartoum government and in control of the jungles on Sudan's southeastern frontier. The escapees from resettlement fell prey to the rebel soldiers in the bush just as the Vietnamese boat people fell prey to pirates on the high seas. According to interviews conducted by Khartoum-based relief officials, several hundred Tigrean women and children escaped from resettlement camps only to be taken into captivity by the SPLA. The women and girl children were raped repeatedly, while the boys were forced to become fighters.

Harden pointed out in his article that "the stories told here. . . . come not from outsiders, but from peasant farmers (who) in 13 separate interviews. . . . told a remarkably consistent story." He and Powers spent two days at Damazin doing nothing but interviewing a completely new set of refugees, and both reporters came up with exactly the same information as had Clay.

Harden's report triggered a moving editorial in *The Washington Post* a few days later but not much else. The television networks as usual were preoccupied elsewhere. Yet what I find particularly disturbing was that at no point in 1985 or 1986 did *The New York Times* send a reporter to Damazin. Neither Clifford May, Nairobi-based Sheila Rule, nor anyone from the *Times* Cairo bureau had ever gone there. Even the best newspapers cannot be expected to cover every single story, but the refugees at Damazin were at the center of the whole resettlement controversy, and they were available to journalists for months at a time. The *Times* dutifully editorialized about resettlement and reported the controversy in the relief community surrounding it, but the most prestigious daily in the United States never probed the issue in the same aggressive manner in which it had probed human rights violations of far lesser magnitude in other areas of the world, particularly the Middle East and South Africa.

It is intriguing that resettlement received so little attention in the United States. The manner in which Ethiopians died evoked the well-known slaughter of millions of Cambodians by the Khmer Rouge in the mid-1970s. Yet not only was the U.S. public more concerned about the abuses in South Africa but both the media and the public also evinced more interest in the fate of a few hundred South Korean students who had been detained by the police than about tens of thousands of peasants in Ethiopia who had been starved, beaten, and worked to death in a veritable jungle gulag.

As I see it, the fundamental flaw in the resettlement story was that it was a foreign news item with no domestic spinoff. Because the United States, despite its generous aid, was not influential in Ethiopia—and had not been for a decade—it was a tragedy for which the Reagan administration bore absolutely no responsibility. Although private donations to certain charities were indirectly assisting resettlement, as were public donations from other governments, USAID always was careful to channel U.S. aid to relief operations unconnected with the program. Thus, there was nothing to dig up against the administration, and the herd instinct in the media never was activated. Even after the MSF visit, journalists almost never raised the matter at State Department briefings. Ethiopia had been "lost" years before, and U.S. interests were not being jeopardized by the inhumane actions of Ethiopia's regime. Perhaps the story would have attracted more interest if the deaths had been the work of one of Africa's colorful, lunatic madmen, like Idi Amin or

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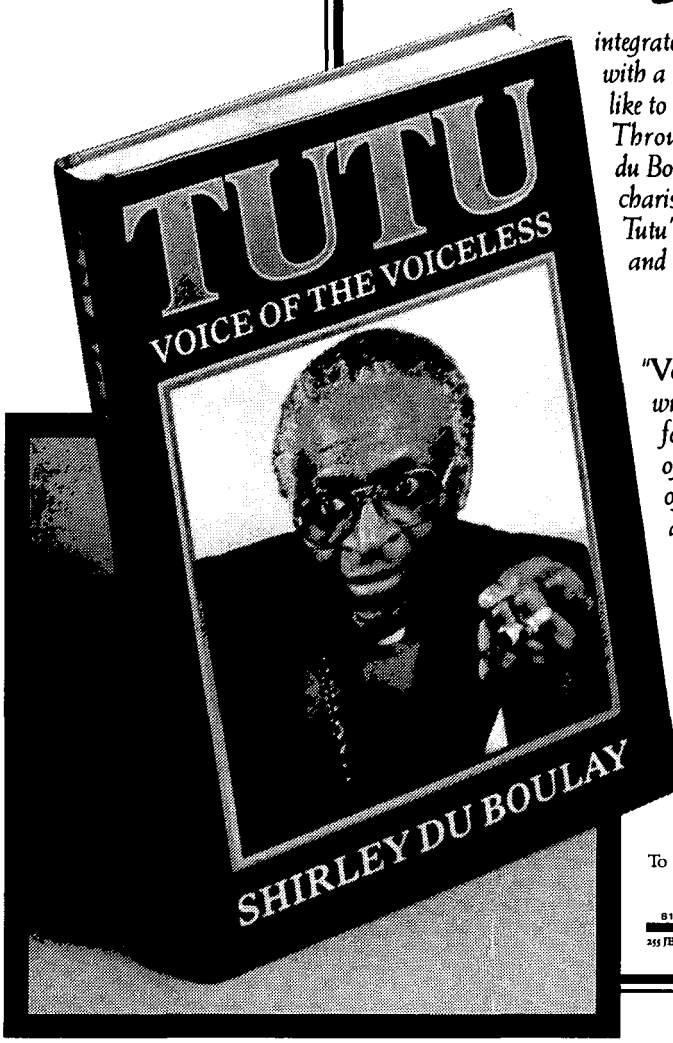

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Muammer Gaddafi. But the communist rule of Lieutenant Mengistu Halle Marian was too efficient for that, and the killing had little mass market appeal.

Abramspeak

The media, however, bore only part of the responsibility for the limited public outcry. The response of the U.S. government was equally disappointing. On the face of it, the Reagan administration did all that normally could have been expected. Chester Crocker, assistant secretary for African affairs, spoke out against resettlement on a handful of occasions. USAID administrator M. Peter McPherson rarely missed an opportunity to bash the Ethiopian authorities over the head about it. Richard Schifter, who replaced Elliott Abrams as the human rights assistant secretary (when Abrams became assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs), made the investigation of resettlement abuses a priority. Finally, there was Alan L. Keyes, the assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs and now a candidate for the United States Senate from Maryland. As a black, Keyes was perhaps in a better position to publicly articulate what many others were saying only privately. On March 6, 1986, he told the Senate subcommittee on African affairs:

"Those who condemn the white government of South Africa for its injustices against blacks but who do not even wish to verify the injustices that may be perpetrated by Ethiopia's government against its people obviously imply that a higher standard of human rights is to be applied to whites than to people of other races and colors."

Nevertheless, if ever there were an issue tailor-made for a president who was forever searching his 3 x 5 file cards for examples of why fighting communism around the world was not just a strategic imperative but a moral one as well, it was resettlement. Resettlement was the issue Ronald Reagan had been waiting for all his presidency. But when did President Reagan ever speak out about it? Maybe he did, once or twice. If so, it was a reference too obscure for even Ethiopia experts to remember.

If not Reagan, why not Bush, at least? Bush did criticize the resettlement program on a handful of occasions in the context of his trips to Africa, but he never really jumped on it in Washington. As one State Department official observed cynically, "Bush should have taken on resettlement as *his* issue. If ever there was a guy who needed—and was always looking for—his own issue it was Bush." Resettlement was perhaps the only cause available to him at the time that was original and would have helped to shore up his credentials among conservatives, without alienating the moderate elements in the Republican party.

Some felt that the reason resettlement never made it past the door of the State Department was that Chester Crocker stood in the way. According to this theory, Crocker's overriding obsession was his South Africa policy. He had gotten his job on account of his views on South Africa, and his performance as assistant secretary was being judged solely on how he implemented them. The last thing he needed was another complication to further erode his already strife-torn policy toward that country. Therefore, he seemed to some observers to be gun-shy about having the White House launch a frontal human rights attack against a black African regime at a time when President Reagan was being chastised for his indulgence of the white minority government in Pretoria.

Abrams told me:

"There has to be some kind of pressure from a human rights group for a human rights issue to be considered legitimate. U.S. government statements alone can't do it. And for a long time, human rights groups were saying nothing about resettlement because a lot of democratic governments were assisting the Ethiopian Marxist regime. Human rights groups of the left were certainly reluctant to criticize. The U.S. government's criticism therefore looked political rather than humanitarian. And remember, at the time we were in the middle of a struggle over South Africa. You have to ask: if the Reagan administration hit the government of Ethiopia hard, who would support us and who would criticize us? Would the main effect be to help the people of Ethiopia, or merely to add fuel to the fire over our Africa policy? I think part of the problem is the reluctance of human rights organizations to criticize left-wing governments."

Abrams's remarks contained a subtle and fascinating contradiction: first, he suggested that the Reagan administration did attack the Ethiopian government for its resettlement practices, but then he implied that the administration didn't. I strongly suspect that Abrams, one of the more ideologically motivated of Reagan's political appointees, felt that as much as the administration did to publicize human rights abuses in Ethiopia, it could have done even more. I think he, as well as others, felt that had the administration wanted to pull out all the stops, it had the power to make resettlement a big media issue.

Those who discounted the conclusions of the U.S. government, Cultural Survival, MSF, Berliner Missionswerk, and others usually argued that resettlement was a necessary step toward the prevention of

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future famines, even if, for the time being, it was being carried out badly.

Resettlement, however, was just one aspect of collectivization. The other, much larger, component was villagization. In 1984 and 1985, the government managed to resettle about 500,000 of the 1.5 million people targeted; the program was resumed again in 1987 after the last unsteady flickers of the media spotlight had been snuffed out. But in roughly the same time frame, 1984-1986, ten times that many people—approximately five million—had been uprooted through villagization, with another 27 million scheduled for the same fate by the mid-1990s.

Kulaks in the bush

Villagization—a more grandiose, amorphous, and incomprehensible program than resettlement—made even less of an impact on the outside world. The basic outline of the fate of millions of peasants, mostly Moslem Oromos, under villagization, was not in dispute. The army would move into a group of villages, requisition the crops and livestock, and force the inhabitants to tear down their huts piece by piece. Then the peasants were made to walk, with the remnants of their homes on their backs, to a new, central location that had been selected by party cadres. The site almost always would lack a mosque, a school, and an adequate, nearby water source. But it would come equipped with a guard tower, a red flag, and a banner of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia. Villagization happened deep in the bush, far away from the diplomats, television camera crews, and other Western monitors, and it was too great a cataclysm to be grasped through the medium of the print alone.

Moreover, the most descriptive and penetrating article about villagization was an October 3, 1986, cover story in the French news magazine *L'Express*, which isn't read in the United States. Although effectively written articles and editorials on the subject did appear (notably in *Newsweek*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*) almost all were published in mid-1986, long after the Ethiopia story had been submerged by developments in South Africa. While resettlement came to light too late to make a strong impact, villagization came to light even later.

However, unlike resettlement, villagization had no real defenders in the Western relief community in Addis Ababa. Even the Swedes, who in the past had been the most sympathetic to Marxist-style agricultural experiments, publicly criticized villagization and reduced their aid budget in Ethiopia on account of it. Among the most important reasons for this is the fact that villagization was more blatantly ideological than resettlement was. Mengistu had spoken out openly against "kulaks." And in a separate study done in Somalia on escapees from villagization, Cultural Survival reported that, indeed, all those interviewed had been relatively prosperous farmers prior to being "villagized."

In the face of these realities, nobody believed that the program was meant to combat drought, famine, and underdevelopment, as the Ethiopian government authorities claimed. Yet, although nobody defended it, no Western government really condemned it either. Even the Reagan administration's criticism was muted, compared to the way it attacked resettlement. Rarely in modern times have so many people had their human rights abused in so organized a fashion with hardly a whimper of real protest.

The utter brutality of the experience was far worse than the *Newsweek* and *L'Express* articles had suggested. In the first months of 1986, 50,000 Moslem Oromos escaping villagization stampeded over the border in Somalia, where they were temporarily put in a squalid refugee camp called Tug Wajale B, located a few miles from the Ethiopian frontier. In the spring, Jason Clay of Cultural Survival and Lance Clark of the independent, nonprofit Refugee Policy Group in Washington, D.C., went to Tug Wajale to interview the new arrivals about their experience in Ethiopia. All the Oromos interviewed told a similar story of a whole way of life being systematically destroyed—not only by the razing of ancestral villages but through a deliberate policy, implemented by the army, of wrecking mosques, raping women, and removing children to far-off schools.

Officials at the State Department in Washington said that the main reason why a greater protest wasn't made against villagization was because, unlike in the case of Cultural Survival's resettlement study, the United States was unable to verify independently the stories told to Clay by the refugees in Somalia. Was it really necessary to have independent verification for every gory detail before the State Department could scream bloody murder? Even in the most controlled and manipulated circumstances, journalists who were taken to showcase sites in Hararghe with Ethiopian government guides could not escape the feeling that something awful was taking place. One doesn't have to read between the lines of Sheila Rule's June 22, 1986 story in *The New York Times* (buried on page 11) to get this message:

"There is little free access to the new villages and government escorts, or 'minders,' are ever present. The authorities choose the areas that visitors are allowed to see. . . .

"An elderly woman, asked for her views [on vil-

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lagization], replied at length, her words sounding as though they were steeped in anger. When she finished, the [government] interpreter's translation was: 'I don't know. I am an ignorant woman.' "

I decided to go to Somalia to hear the refugees' stories first hand. It took me a week to get a visa from the Somalia embassy to Nairobi and then to get onto one of the twice-weekly flights to Mogadishu. Once in Mogadishu, the U.N. High Commission on Refugees assisted me with the rest of my journey, which included another plane flight to the steamy port of Berbera in the north; from there a UNHCR Land Cruiser drove across the entire width of northern Somalia, first to Hargeisa, where I spent the night, and then finally, to Tug Wajale, where I slept in a sleeping bag inside a drafty tent on the freezing windy plateau. The return journey to Nairobi took just as long. Several members of the Nairobi-based foreign press corps also made the journey at one time or another in 1986. But because Tug Wajale could not be done as a "quickie," practically no one from outside Africa came to the story. (The only exception I am aware of was Philip Revzin of *The Wall Street Journal*, whose report was published May 26, 1986.) Thus, only a handful of articles appeared about the testimony of the Oromo refugees, and almost all of those were buried on inside pages.

I interviewed 14 refugees at Tug Wajale B and another nearby camp in three days at the end of October 1986. Almost all of the interviews were done in isolation. The refugee was moved by Land Cruiser to an area out of earshot of his or her compatriots, where I spent, on the average, about 90 minutes talking to the person. The translator I used was not a member of the Oromo Liberation Front or any other political organization I know of, and he had been highly recommended to me by several foreign relief officials. I tried hard to avoid asking leading questions, and I sought constantly to ferret out inconsistencies in the stories I heard, so much so that one of the women I interviewed accused me of being hostile. Despite all of these precautions, I was impressed with the consistency of the accounts. All, interviewed separately, told more or less the same story. Nothing I heard was substantially different from what Jason Clay or Lance Clark had reported, even though some of the people I interviewed had arrived at different times and were in a different batch of refugees from the ones Clay and Clark interviewed. I was warned that refugees were prone to invent tales of political persecution so that they would be considered by the U.N. as bona fide "refugees," instead of just as drought victims who were liable to be sent back to their country of origin after agricultural conditions improve. But my interviews proved otherwise. These escapees, who had lived in isolated villages, spoke only Oromo, and probably encountered white foreigners for the first time in their lives at Tug Wajale, simply were not sophisticated enough to recognize bureaucratic distinctions—some not every relief official could recognize. Yet not only did few want to believe the refugees, as in the case of resettlement, few even wanted to listen.

Subsidized communism

Villagization went on unabated and thereby paved the road to the next famine by uprooting the way of life of the country's most successful group of farmers. In 1987, foreign donors were helping to make up cereal deficits in 22 of 39 regions of Hararghe, which prior to villagization traditionally had registered surpluses. Thus, large amounts of Western aid were subsidizing communism, albeit indirectly, while charities such as Live Aid were serving to buttress a ruling elite that had destroyed the lives of more of its own people than had any other government in this decade, with the possible exception of Iran's, and that consistently had refused to negotiate a truce in a war that had killed hundreds of thousands. Clay's frequent assertion that Western aid in the long run could kill more people than it saved in the short run was neither farfetched nor unfair.

Meanwhile, partly on account of the uproar raised by the U.S. government and MSF, resettlement ground to a halt in January 1986. But it got rolling again in March 1987. The first mention of this appeared near the bottom of a story on Ethiopia, written by correspondent James Brooke in *The New York Times* (March 13, 1987). The article labeled resettlement "controversial." *The New York Times* correspondent also noted that the Ethiopian government planned to resettle only 30,000 people a month, which was half the rate of the 1984-1985 period, thereby indicating perhaps that resettlement would be less "hurriedly executed" and therefore somewhat more humane. If it eventually turns out that resettlement—if not villagization—was truly reformed, then the Reagan administration and a few human rights and relief groups deserved the credit. The media's overall response to Ethiopian collectivization was remarkably passive.

For a time at least, U.S. journalists were as ubiquitous in Ethiopia as they have been in Nicaragua. But as Arch Puddington wrote in *Commentary*, while "the Nicaraguan revolution has been subjected to a microscopic examination," the one in Ethiopia, which has led to the deaths of many more people, "has been largely ignored." □

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WHO'S WHO

Michael Dukakis did try to let **Jesse Jackson** know about **Lloyd Bentsen**, but **Susan Estrich**, whose "I have the power, I am in charge, I run it, I manage it" manifesto about her role in the Dukakis campaign was quoted here last month, apparently forgot to instruct herself to wake up in time to give Jackson the courtesy of advance notice of the vice-presidential choice. The assignment was given her by Dukakis's close friend, **Paul Brountas**. Estrich forgot. Insiders speculate that she consciously or unconsciously resents Brountas's closeness to the candidate. . . .

Speaking of injudicious statements to reporters by campaign aides, Dukakis's speechwriter and friend, **Ira Jackson**, came very close to pulling another Estrich when he confided to a journalist that what had seemed to be Dukakis's very personal statement about the Athenian Oath at the end of his acceptance speech was in fact something Jackson had come up with. "The Athenian Oath," Jackson told the reporter, "is something I've had by my office telephone ever since I've had an office." Speechwriters always face a dilemma in balancing their career ambitions, which are served by advertising to the world their eloquent contributions, and their duty to the candidate, who wants the world to think his eloquence is his own. In this case, Jackson may have found the wrong answer to the dilemma. . . .

As for Bentsen, the tenderness of the press toward him amazes knowledgeable observers. On the Senate Finance Committee he is the leading advocate for the special interests. Only *Newsweek* has made clear the extent to which he has been in bed with groups traditionally opposed by most Democrats. . . .

Democrats should ask Little, Brown to postpone **Richard Goodwin**'s new book until after the election. Here's what he says about **Robert McNamara**, who served with Goodwin in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations: "His calculated, egregious deception of Congress, and, indirectly, the American people, make the current circumlocution and outright lies of **Poindexter** and **North**, et al. seem like models of honest witnesses.". . .

Those who contend there is little real difference between Dukakis and Bush cite the candidates' principal economic advisers, **Lawrence Summers** (Dukakis) and **Michael Boskin** (Bush). "I think they're made from the same cloth," says **Joseph Pechman** of Brookings. For example, on how low unemployment can go without producing inflation, Boskin says 5-5½ percent and Summers, 5 percent. . . .

Senator **Claiborne Pell** is the only member of Congress to have an assistant assigned solely to paranormal research. The aide, **C. B. Scott Jones**, is paid $48,853 a year to keep up with the latest developments in telepathy, UFOs, and ESP. Jones says this interest grew out of an experience he had while serving as a naval attache in India. He refuses to reveal details of the experience on the grounds that they "might embarrass the government.". . .

Have you heard the answer **George Bush**'s friends are urging him to give to **Ted Kennedy**'s "Where was George?": "Dry, sober, and at home with his wife.". . .

Frederick Malek, who has become George Bush's man on the staff of the Republican National Committee, is an alumnus of the Nixon White House who once managed to capture in just a single gesture the charm that was characteristic of his colleagues there. Trying to impress an attractive blonde reporter, he raced his sports car past a long line of vehicles waiting to get on the ramp from the George Washington Parkway to the 14th Street Bridge and, ignoring the bleats of protesting horns, inserted himself between two cars at the head of the line. . . .

In—*White House*: Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director for Public Liaison—**Kevin H. Kruke**; Associate Counsel to the President—**Michael J. Astrue**; Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Chief of Staff—**John C. Tuck**; Deputy Chief of Staff—**M.B. Oglesby Jr.** *Commerce*: Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere—**B. Kent Burton**. *Education*: Secretary—**Lauro F. Cavazos**. *Energy*: Deputy Secretary—**Joseph F. Salgado**; Undersecretary—**Donna R. Fitzpatrick**. *Justice*: Attorney General—**Richard Thornburgh**; Assistant Attorney General for Legal Counsel—**Douglas Kmiec**; Assistant Attorney General for Legislative Affairs—**Thomas R. Boyd**. *Labor*: Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training—**Robert T. Jones**. *State*: Ambassador to Belgium—**Maynard W. Glitman**; Ambassador to Chad—**Robert Pugh**. *Treasury*: Assistant Secretary for Enforcement—**Salvatore R. Martoche**. *Agencies and Commissions*: Commissioner, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission—**Elizabeth Moler**; Governor, Federal Reserve System—**John P. LaWare**.

Out—*White House*: Deputy Assistant to the President—**Daniel Crippen**. *Education*: Secretary—**William J. Bennett**. *Energy*: Deputy Secretary—**William F. Martin**; Undersecretary—**Joseph F. Salgado**; Assistant Secretary for Construction and Renewable Energy—**Donna R. Fitzpatrick**. *Justice*: Attorney General—**Edwin Meese III**. *Labor*: Assistant Secretary for Labor Management Standards—**Salvatore R. Martoche**. *State*: Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs—**Gaston J. Sigur**; Ambassador to Belgium—**Geoffrey Swaebe**; Ambassador to Chad—**John Blane**. *Treasury*: Assistant Secretary for Enforcement—**Francis A. Keating II**. *Agencies and Commissions*: Commissioner, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission—**Charles G. Stalon**; Deputy Administrator, General Services Administration—**Paul K. Trause**.

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Why Political Cartoonists Sell Out

In the race for national fame, they ignore what matters at home.

by Lee Judge and Richard Samuel West

If George Fisher is such a good political cartoonist, why haven't you heard of him?

Simple.

Fisher specializes in local issues. For him, local means Little Rock, Arkansas. Because he does so few cartoons on national issues, you'll rarely find his work reprinted in *Time*, *Newsweek*, or your city's newspaper. But those who follow state politics in the *Arkansas Gazette* know Fisher is a powerful force.

In the early sixties, Fisher was drawn to the drawing board by the embarrassing antics of Orval Faubus, the segregationist governor of Arkansas. Fisher ridiculed him in one cartoon after another. A classic Fisher cartoon depicted Faubus as Betsy Ross—sewing George Wallace's likeness onto the American flag. In going after Faubus, remembered one of Fisher's old editors, "George swung his drawing pen like a battle-ax." When Arkansas eventually rejected Faubus, Fisher took satisfaction in knowing he played an important role in stoking the fires of disenchantment.

"You know I voted for Faubus in his first run for governor," Fisher told *Target*, the political cartoon quarterly. "But when he called out the National Guard at Central High [over segregation], I opposed him. I simply came to cartooning with the Faubus regime and haven't had any ambition to go nationwide. I thought that it was an important thing for me to express an opinion locally because no one was doing it."

Since the late sixties, Fisher has trained his sights on another target: the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. By damming one free-flowing Arkansas river after another without any apparent regard for the ecological consequences, the Army Corps has taken plenty of heat—much of it generated by Fisher, who led the opposition to two proposed dams on the Buffalo River. Harold Alexander of the Arkansas Wildlife Federation says, "Fisher's cartoons were among the most effective weapons leveled at stopping the destruction of that beautiful river," which continues to flow freely. (In fact, the Federation considered Fisher so effective they published a book of his cartoons.) Fisher's editor, Jerry Dhonau, says, "George has done a lot to shape public attitudes on public works projects." He's shaped those attitudes with humor. One of his most devastating cartoons depicts two Army Corps officials, donning buttons that read "Keep Busy" as they look out over the state of Arkansas, depicted as one huge flood-control project. "God would have done it if he'd had the money," quips one engineer.

George Fisher's career is testimony to just how influential a political cartoonist can be in an age of media saturation. Yet, only about a dozen cartoonists out of more than 300 working in the United States

Lee Judge is the political cartoonist for the Kansas City Star. *Richard Samuel West is the author of* Satire on Stone: The Political Cartoons of Joseph Keppler.

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devote the majority of their cartoons to local and regional issues. Instead they put their pens to national and international topics. Take a look at a few major papers from around the country during May. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* ran 25 cartoons on national issues by its own Jim Borgman and just six of his on local issues. In New Orleans, the governor is brand new and the economy is flat broke. But the majority of the cartoons in *The Times-Picayune* could just as well have run in Buffalo as in The Big Easy. Only six out of 26 by the paper's Mike Lukovich dealt with issues unique to New Orleans or the Bayou State. And *The Washington Post* devotes about as much cartoon space to its hometown as it does to Rangoon. The paper ran 49 cartoons in May. Not one dealt with the problems of *local* Washington government, namely Mayor Marion Barry and the wave of corruption that has swept over his administration.

You would think cartoonists would be aching to fill the breach. After all, editorial cartoonists, whether they'll admit it or not, surely want their cartoons to make a difference. Why not try to do a cartoon that will count—a seething portrait of that unknown, but important, tax commissioner rather than another Dukakis with a big schnozz or Bush with a dopey grin? Sure, national subjects can be fun—but local cartoons can be fun *and effective.* Why go after an elephant with a blow gun? Why not hunt smaller prey?

A Faustian bargain

A simple mantra draws cartoonists away from local issues: awards, syndication, money. Like boys in a locker room, cartoonists are constantly comparing their assets: who's seen in the most newspapers, who's won the most awards, who makes the most money? Unfortunately, few ask who's brought the most change to their community.

At the top of most cartoonists' list of priorities is seeing their work syndicated. When a cartoonist's work gets "picked up," it means that a company that sells features (such as horoscopes and opinion columns) to newspapers around the country agrees to distribute the cartoon for a fee. For the cartoonist on the staff of a newspaper, getting a syndicate contract means the opportunity to get paid twice, three times, a hundred times, for the same work.

While the reprint fees the client papers pay for any one cartoonist's work are modest—usually $500 to $1,000 a year (and even then it's split 50-50 with the syndicate company), they can still add up. Pat Oliphant of the Universal Press Syndicate has about 450 papers; the *Chicago Tribune*'s Jeff MacNelly, 400 papers; and Mike Peters of the *Dayton Daily News*, more than 250 papers. The money is surely important to cartoonists, whose newspaper salaries tend to fall in the $25,000 to $75,000 a year range. But as much as anything, the syndication is a kind of validation for the artist, the simple yardstick for telling who's up and who's down.

George Fisher of the *Arkansas Gazette* skewered the Army Corps of Engineers—and helped stop several of its projects.

Of course, syndicates couldn't care less about that cutting cartoon on the state welfare office that's wasting millions or the unsafe plant that's belching thick smoke. "What do readers in San Francisco care about the Omaha sewer system?" says Lee Salem, editorial director for Universal Press Syndicate. Syndicate executives want cartoons they can peddle from Birmingham to Berkeley. So most of their contracts with cartoonists require a minimum of four national or international cartoons a week. It's a Faustian bargain, bestowing upon the cartoonist a bigger audience but leaving him with only one or two unclaimed cartoons a week. (Ben Sargent of the *Austin-American Statesman* told *Target* that he felt his syndication is "financially worthwhile. It's an all right tradeoff. I'm not really suffering under the constraints of one [local cartoon] a week, but it would be more fun to do two a week.") And one or

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two cartoons is just not enough to really tackle local issues. It's one of the truisms of the business that to be effective, you have to repeat themes and images to get your message across (think of Garry Trudeau's wimpy George Bush or Pat Oliphant's depictions of a tiny, pathetic Jimmy Carter). George Fisher was so effective in Arkansas because he hammered away at the Army Corps of Engineers month in and month out. He also didn't have any syndication obligations to distract him.

The management of newspapers are rarely cheering for their cartoonists to take on tough, local issues. Editorial writers dub it "Afghanistanism"—encouraging the cartoonist to go after the most distant, least controversial topic. The editor who thinks a savage attack on the vice president of the United States is hilarious may fail to see the humor when

The chairman of the commission on the bicentennial of the Constitution resigned, calling this cartoon by Sigmund Wilkinson of the *Philadelphia Daily News* the last straw.

the victim is a city council member or major advertiser he'll be sitting beside at tomorrow's Rotary breakfast. The irony is that plenty of newspapers are expanding their local coverage, launching suburban editions. But just as those new editions have been long on school lunch menus and short on investigative reporting, they've eschewed the hard-hitting editorial cartoons.

Prize juries display a similar lack of interest in local issues. They simply don't have the time to educate themselves on the local doings of dozens of communities so that they can appreciate the power and salience of the local cartoon. The Pulitzer, the nation's most important cartooning prize, has never been awarded to a local cartoon. And while there are other cartoon awards, like the Sigma Delta Chi award, none have the clout of the Pulitzer. Since they only hand out one Pulitzer a year and the average cartoonist, in a career, has a couple of dozen shots at winning it, you don't have to be Carl Sagan to figure out that the vast majority of cartoonists will never win the big prize.

As enticing as it seems, the prospect of syndication success remains elusive, even for most of the best cartoonists. About four out of five political cartoonists who are syndicated fail to attract the number of papers necessary to stay syndicated, says John McMeel, president of United Press Syndicate. Of the 40 or so cartoonists syndicated nationwide, perhaps six have more than 100 papers each. They earn anywhere from $25,000 to $100,000 a year from syndication. Much more common is the cartoonist with fewer than 100 papers whose syndication earnings bring in $10,000 or less. It's too little to be satisfied with, but too much to forsake. And, as McMeel points out, it's not going to get any better. Syndicates are signing up more and more cartoonists with fewer papers around to buy them.

When you get right down to it, very few cartoonists, certainly less than a dozen, have been successful in the syndication-awards-money game. That leaves well over 90 percent of the profession that has sacrificed crusading on local issues yet has little in the way of profit or prestige to show for its work.

"Let's stop them damn pictures"

It wasn't always this way. In the nineteenth century, American political cartoonists were crusaders in the fire-breathing, take-no-prisoners style. Thomas Nast of *Harper's Weekly* led the way. While Nast favored national politics in his work, he achieved everlasting fame not through his cartoons on Presidents Johnson or Grant but through his local cartoons on New York City politics.

New York's Tweed Ring was arguably the most corrupt political organization in American history. The greed of its members was colossal, far outstripping their woeful inability to cover it up. One favored plasterer did nine months' worth of work for the city, services for which the Tweed Ring duly recorded payment of $2,870,464.06. Of course, a significant amount of that money found its way back to the pockets of Tweed henchmen.

In 1870, an outraged Nast began a blistering graphic assault on Tweed and his cronies, literally picturing them for what they were: pillagers, vultures, and thieves. *Harper's Weekly* buttressed Nast's cartoons with documentation and *The New York Times* exposed the inner workings of the Ring as well. But Tweed himself said it best when he declared, "I don't care so much what the papers write about me—my constituents can't read; but, damn it, they can see pictures. Let's stop them damn pictures."

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Tweed tried to bribe Nast and then threatened him and his family. The artist stood firm. Come election day 1871 Nast was widely hailed as chief engineer in the destruction of the Tweed Ring. As Nast biographer Draper Hill has written, Nast and *The New York Times* both "closed in on ring corruption during the latter half of 1871 and were jointly responsible for the voters' repudiation of Tweed and Company at the polls in November."

The following decade saw an explosion in the use of political cartoons, largely due to advances in printing technology that permitted their use in daily newspapers. By the 1890s, most American newspapers had their own cartoonist. As their forces multiplied, few attained the national stature of a Nast, but all became kings of their own domains.

In New York in 1897, Homer Davenport of Hearst's *Journal* was credited with having provoked an anticartoon bill introduced into the state legislature and having then effectively killed it as well. In Philadelphia, Charles Nelan of the *North American* so virulently attacked the Republican candidate for governor, Judge Samuel Pennypacker, that upon his inauguration Pennypacker forced into law a remarkable measure that made it a crime to depict public officials as animals. Nelan and his artist colleagues on the *North American* immediately flaunted the bill by picturing the governor as one unattractive inanimate object after another. Their open disregard for the law subverted the ordinance and, after a few years, was responsible for its repeal.

From World War I into the sixties, only a few crusaders continued to work for daily newspapers, most notably D. R. Fitzpatrick of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Rollin Kirby of the *New York World*, and, of course, Herblock of *The Washington Post*. Those who were numbed by the Eisenhower years found in Herblock's cartoons a glimmer of hope. One of his most famous drawings shows a ladder propped against the Statue of Liberty. A figure, labeled "Hysteria," is yelling "Fire!" and frantically running up the ladder carrying a bucket of water, ready to douse the torch.

But the majority of cartoonists during this period lacked energy and creativity. They relied heavily on tired symbols (John Q. Public, the war-weary world) and dogma (Americanism is good, Communism is bad). Political cartooning fell out of favor because it became cliche-ridden and visually boring.

Enter, in 1964, Pat Oliphant. He came from Australia with a bag of tricks that included satire, wit, caricature, and, most of all, irreverence—just the sort of political commentary the increasingly skeptical children of the sixties were craving. Instead of propounding time-worn truths and predictable dogma, Oliphant went straight for the president. He sent America a simple message: LBJ, and then Nixon, were liars and buffoons. In one cartoon, for example, LBJ is frantically driving a horse-drawn wagon called "Great Society" into the new year 1968. The vehicle is literally disintegrating underneath him.

'I see the state Capitol as another condominium conversion project, RT; we used to rent legislators and now we own them.'

Dennis Renault of the *Sacramento Bee* lambasts House Speaker Willie Brown. Brown devotes a news conference to denouncing the cartoon.

This message reached Jeff MacNelly attending the University of North Carolina, Tony Auth at UCLA, Mike Peters at Washington University in St. Louis, Doug Marlette at Florida State University, and dozens of other aspiring artists around the country. Oliphant awakened them to the potency of political cartooning; it could be made as irreverent as the times. As these protestors turned professionals in the seventies, their work sparked a rebirth of interest in American political cartooning.

Suddenly, it seemed, every political cartoonist could become a rock star. By sticking to national issues, they found there was an expanding market for their work: newspapers competed for them, syndicates enticed the most promising ones into the fold with comic strip options and other money-making ventures, and TV newscasts broadcast animated political cartoons based on their newspaper work.

Now we're at a point where most cartoonists focus completely on national politics. Yes, a Herblock may

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make a difference nationally. And a series of "Doonesbury" cartoons can affect the way the country views the vice-president. (It was Garry Trudeau's Bush who "put his manhood in escrow.") But these are the exceptions that prove the rule. And most cartoonists today go so far as to dismiss altogether the importance of being influential. "Changing the world would be nice, but I don't think that's really what cartooning's all about," says Tony Auth, a nationally syndicated cartoonist with *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. "I tend to think all of us [commentators] are contributing one particle a day to a torrent of information, public relations, propaganda, analysis, lies, truths. . .so that the effect of any one particle is greatly diminished."

Don Wright of the *Miami News*, whose work is also nationally syndicated, is equally modest. While he hopes his cartoons force his readers to think about issues they hadn't considered, he suggests that's "a very lofty ambition," and adds, "Ideally, effecting change would be wonderful. But I'm really not so sure that happens. After all, my cartoons are just an extension of my own feelings."

"That's real stuff"

Still, a Touch of Nast is out there waiting for any cartoonist willing to take on local issues. Cartoonists can be important if they take up a worthy cause in a small forum. Signe Wilkinson, of the *Philadelphia Daily News*, can attest to that. "Local officials get their pictures in the paper, sober stories written about them, and ponderously critical editorials wagging fingers at them, but when they feel the unexpected sharp point of a cartoonist's pen, they squirm and they hate it," she said. Such was the case of Diane Semingson, a city official in charge of the U.S. Constitution bicentennial celebration. Wilkinson's cartoons, based on reports in the Philadelphia press, depicted her as an autocratic, secretive, and ineffectual leader. There was Wilkinson's cartoon, "I call this meeting to order," that showed Semingson in a giant conference room, with armed guards blocking the doors and behind her a giant banner saying "Me the People." Semingson called the cartoon the last straw and resigned.

"When Signe focuses on sensitive local issues, readers raise all kinds of hell," says the paper's deputy editorial page editor, Don Harrison.

Dennis Renault, of the *Sacramento Bee*, has been a frequent critic of California House Speaker Willie Brown. In 1983 Renault drew a cartoon that suggested Brown benefited financially from lobbying efforts to get San Francisco apartments converted to condominiums. The cartoon shows two shadowy figures holding a newspaper with Brown's likeness. "We used to rent legislators, now we own them," says one. Brown devoted an entire news conference to attacking Renault, but he failed to deflect the charge. In part because of this, the bill failed to pass.

Even cartoonists who focus on national issues in their work attest to the power of local issues. Mike Keefe of the *Denver Post* draws a local cartoon every Friday. He gets more reader reaction to that cartoon "than all of my other cartoons combined."

Milt Priggee knows all about the pressures on local cartoonists to cool it. Last year, he was just settling in to his new job as the *Spokane Spokesman-Review* cartoonist when he took on Duane Hagadone, a local developer hot to exploit the commercial possibilities of Lake Coeur d'Alene. Priggee's caricature: Hagadone as a slimy sea monster.

The management of the *Spokesman-Review*, in a show of courage, ran an editorial saying they regretted printing the cartoon; its general manager characterized it as "one of the worst I have ever seen in my life." Priggee was put on extended probation, but the public loved it. Cars in the Spokane region began sporting "I heart Priggee" and "I don't heart Priggee" bumperstickers with, at last count, pro-Priggee bumperstickers outnumbering anti-Priggee bumperstickers 30 to 1.

These successes may seem puny compared to, oh, fighting global hunger. But the fact is, cartoonists can do only so much. The choice isn't getting a bad law off the books *or* stopping hunger. It's between getting a bad law off the books or having nothing of substance to show for your work.

Political cartoonists need to enlarge their definition of achievement. They should stop asking who's won the most awards, who's earning the most money, who's got the most papers, and start asking who's having the most impact.

Those cartoonists who devote themselves to local cartoons may not find riches and national fame, but they're more likely to look at their city or region and feel that the work they've done has made a difference.

Tim Menees knows. He's the local cartoonist for the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette* and he doesn't syndicate his political cartoons, concentrating instead on two to four local issues a week. He told *Target*: "Go out to the Monongahela area and find out how many people are concerned about the Middle East versus when is Dad going back to work. . .I mean, drawing Carter seeing the big rabbit in the swamp. Give me a break! Everybody did that, you know? When you have a problem like a corrupt police department, that's real stuff. I mean, that affects you and me and how we live." □

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The Iran-contra committee preened before the television lights, dished out immunity, let lackluster lawyers lead the charge—and let North & Co. off the hook.

The Committee That Couldn't Shoot Straight

by Steven Waldman

The Iran-contra scandal has been reduced to just another item in the debit column of Reagan's ledger—a stain to be sure, but not much worse than Ed Meese's stock holdings, Noriega's drug running, and Reagan's opposition to plant-closing legislation. Three of the four men indicted in the scandal—including the president's national security adviser—probably won't come to trial on the main conspiracy charges. And Oliver North is considered a national treasure by too many people. The Iran-contra committee deserves much of the blame. In their book*, Maine Senators George Mitchell and William Cohen, two of the most impressive members of the committee, argue that it did serve a useful purpose by disseminating information quickly, but they also try to explain some of the panelists' mistakes. Occasionally, they sound like the job interviewee who responds to the "what-are-your-weaknesses" question by saying he works too darn hard. Mitchell and Cohen concede with great candor, for example, that a major "problem" was that the committee chose its attorneys on the basis of their brilliant legal minds instead of TV good looks—but add that, darn it, they'd do it again. Their brutally honest self-criticism somehow makes them look better.

The title of this book certainly doesn't refer to its authors. Mitchell, a Democrat, and Cohen, a Republican, worship at the altar of bipartisanship and reasonableness. When the committee appointments were announced, I thought it was brilliant for the congressional leadership to appoint mostly pro-contra, dull respectables to the panel. That way the investigation couldn't be tagged a partisan, anti-contra witchhunt. It would focus instead on arms for hostages, cover-ups, illegal wars, and the rule of law. Cohen and Mitchell held the same view. But we all got it backwards. The problem was not that the administration was populated by too many "men of zeal" but that the committee was stocked with too few. Excessive bipartisanship and overreliance on nonpolitical hired help injured the committee more—and allowed the administration to get off the hook.

Steven Waldman, a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly, *is a correspondent in the Washington bureau of* Newsweek.

**Men of Zeal.* William S. Cohen, George J. Mitchell, *Viking, $19.95.*

Fawn and Venus

But first things first. Did Cohen and Mitchell *really* write the book? Although legislators always insist they did, in this case the claim is entirely plausible. After all, one of its authors, Cohen, is not just a writer (*The Double Man*, with Senator Gary Hart) but a poet (*A Baker's Nickel*). Unfortunately, *Men of Zeal* has a few too many "poetic" touches. The authors point out, for example, that CIA Director William Casey was "dead and thus beyond the reach of any mortal subpeona" and that administration officials were "snookered" by "fast-fingered merchants schooled in steamy street bazaars." The tragic Bud McFarlane "yielded [the words] one by one, as if he were giving birth to each;" his suicide attempt was an effort to "accelerate his mortality." But

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nowhere would writer's block have been more welcome than in their chapter on Fawn Hall. They note that Hall "filled the nation's capital with helium," leading serious-minded men to experience "moments of adolescent giddiness." They know whereof they speak. Hall, they wrote, has "golden hair cascading about a fine-boned face," projecting "a casual stylishness, reminiscent of actress Farrah Fawcett. . . . Fawn arrives at the witness table, Botticelli's Venus yielded from a foaming sea." Gentlemen, please!

Their admission that members of the committee did, in fact, joke about asking Fawn Hall for her phone number is one of an occasional gossipy nugget that qualifies *Men of Zeal* as a "candid inside story." The book shows committee members obsessed with how the hearings could propel their careers, "an opportunity to step from relative political anonymity, reinforce one's standing at home, and enhance one's future national prospects." One big fear of committee members: that Fawn Hall would cry while *they* were questioning her.

Most disturbing, the authors (without naming names) paint a picture of a rather cowardly group. McFarlane's red-faced, "it-is-more-than-passing-strange" speech on America's inability to combat terrorism succeeded, for example, in "muting" several lines of inquiry, they say. And when North began turning up the music, some congressmen went into full retreat: "The effect on the members of the committee was immediate and, in some cases, overwhelming. All America was watching. And all America liked Ollie, or so it seemed. Careers hung in the balance. Committee members began to worry about how many constituents would remember their feelings of antagonism toward their representatives on the next election day."

Mitchell and Cohen argue that the sheer mechanics of the committee compounded their problems. Having 26 participants made it unwieldy. Why so many? The decision to form a joint House-Senate committee came *after* the leadership had appointed the separate committees. Creating a small joint committee would have meant rescinding invitations. Perhaps their biggest strategic mistake was setting a deadline for the report's completion. That gave leverage to North's attorneys, who threatened to drag out hearings if they didn't get what they wanted. And it kept the committee from exploring important subjects, most notably the "off the books" covert capability.

The committee's biggest problem, they say, was TV. The seating arrangement made them look like an imperial tribunal persecuting a martyr. Senate Chief Counsel Arthur Liman's "dark penetrating eyes," double chin, and accent were gruesome on TV. They cite the abundance of anti-semitic mail as evidence that he wasn't telegenic. (Indeed, Cohen and Mitchell seem to use mail as a prime measure of public support or opposition, while it more accurately gauges the brain chemical balance of any district's least stable citizens.) The anti-semitism apparently was weighing on them fairly heavily. At one point, when Republican congressmen with visions of Ollie endorsements dancing in their heads began complaining that Liman was going too hard and too long, Cohen came to the chief counsel's rescue. Liman sent Cohen, who isn't Jewish, an appreciative note: "But why does your name have to be Cohen?"

The problem, though, was not that Liman looked too Jewish or that John Nields, the long-haired House counsel, looked too much like a draft dodger, but that, as the committee tried to champion the "rule of law," it consented to a rule of lawyers. It wasn't until the fourth day of North's testimony that a legislator questioned him; the cowards, it seemed, had to rely on hired guns to knock off a golden-hearted patriot.

Liman and Nields approached the Washington scandal with private practice sensibilities. Liman is a white-collar crime lawyer; in his New York world the motivating force for wrongdoing is greed. His questioning of the first witnesses, which set the stage for North, emphasized that these men strayed because of money. It's true Secord and Hakim may have been so motivated—obviously a peril of privatizing foreign policy—but North and Poindexter were not. Liman didn't seem to understand that ideology can fuel zealotry as much as money.

For his part, Nields focused excessively on questions of legality and the simplistic notion that secrecy per se is bad. He was not capable of articulating major themes the way politicians are. Say what you will about congressmen, the one thing they know better than lawyers is how to communicate a political idea. They can dress it up in corny metaphors, say it with a country lilt, and march into it with a patriotic drumroll. The politicians at the hearings emphasized not just the officials' disrespect for "the law" but their contempt for democracy, common sense, honesty, and accountability. Nields, on the other hand, will be remembered for clumsily asking North about what happened at "two thousand" hours—North corrected the Yale graduate: "Twenty hundred. . . military time."—and offering the question that prompted the lieutenant colonel's Abu-Nidal-wants-to-murder-my-little-girl defense for illegally accepting gifts and falsifying records. (Interestingly, Mitchell and Cohen say North's attorney, Brendan Sullivan, requested that the committee start off

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by questioning his client about the security gate. That should have been a clue that North was preparing something special.)

The diversion diversion

When the committee hastily voted to give North and Poindexter limited-use immunity, it made an important decision. The scandal could be judged in either a legal forum or a political forum. They chose the political forum believing that getting the facts out quickly was of supreme importance. Unfortunately, they then threw away their political tools and pressed the case as if it were a trial. Apolitical lawyers would lead, and partisanship would be sublimated. (In fact, partisanship is considered a bit of a swear word with Cohen and Mitchell. A promotional insert for the book brags that it is "quintessentially nonpartisan.") But the quest for consensus ultimately undermined the committee's performance. At least one major strategic mistake—allowing Sullivan to dictate the terms of North's testimony—was made because Inouye and the Republican vice-chairman, Warren Rudman, wanted to avoid a partisan split. In reality, Rudman acted as de facto cochairman. In some cases that was probably a plus: his questioning was often among the most piercing. But as committee spokesman, Rudman also helped keep the focus on what the president knew about the diversion. Reagan's knowledge of the diversion was clearly an important question. But the fixation on it ultimately steered attention away from equally serious issues—like what Reagan knew about the contra resupply effort and what the rest of the U.S. government was up to. Ironically, the committee's leadership could have been quite different: Byrd was going to appoint Mitchell chairman but feared he would be seen as too partisan.

Of course at the same time the committee was losing the political battle it was also endangering the independent counsel's criminal case. Granting immunity gave Lawrence Walsh less time to prepare and dramatically complicated his task. Ideally, an immunity offer could have been a bargaining chip to get more favorable conditions for North's testimony. Instead, Brendan Sullivan dictated his terms: North could not be recalled as a witness; he would testify earlier rather than later; Sullivan himself would certify compliance with the subpoena; and North would not be questioned ahead of time, as all the other witnesses had been. Had they preinterviewed North they might have been better prepared for his sometimes unorthodox lines of defense. (Am I a pathological liar? Yes, of course I am, you old buffoon. But it's lives or lies!)

Members acceded to Sullivan because they feared a lengthy court battle over the records. In private session, Mitchell argued that the committee should stand firm because it was in North's own interest to testify. Mitchell proposed rejecting the demands, but Rudman and Inouye (with the crucial support of Liman) kept the motion from a vote to avoid a partisan split. "The committee had caved in," Cohen and Mitchell write. "To get Oliver North to testify, we had let him set the time and terms of his testimony. This was the single most important decision made by the committee."

Nields (occasionally) and Liman (invariably) were brilliant in eliciting information from the witnesses. And the committee's staff did a remarkable job stitching together the scandal's byzantine plot from thousands of documents and depositions. But the committee's most impressive moments were the eloquent speeches of Lee Hamilton, Mitchell, Inouye, and the administration defender, Henry Hyde. The politicians proved more capable of putting North's actions in context. A turning point was Mitchell's speech at the beginning of North's second week. Mitchell took offense at North's implication that contra opponents are unpatriotic. True, Mitchell aimed low, but Olliemania fan clubs were already setting up P.O. boxes. And the key point was that he gave a speech—and speeches are what made North so successful. Mitchell writes: "Whenever North felt like it, he simply made a speech. Sometimes his speeches were in response to a question, sometimes not. I recognized early in the week that if I wanted to get a point across I had to do it myself, in a speech of my own." In fact, Mitchell and Cohen argue persuasively that, Sullivan's protestations notwithstanding, the congressional hearing format gave North much more power than a courtroom setting. His nonresponsive answers would not have been tolerated in court. (Sam Irvin showed during Watergate that committee chairmen can control witnesses without seeming unfair, but it's easier to cut off an H.R. Haldeman than an Oliver North.)

Mitchell and Cohen can't bring themselves to admit that among committee members the respected-on-both-sides-of-the-aisle Democrats like Sam Nunn, Les Aspin, and David Boren performed poorly. In fact, the committee's composition was a liability. The Republicans appointed four pro-contra senators and one waffler, Cohen himself. And in opposition? Three pro-contra and three anti-contra Democrats. No one was selected for his ability to make the case against the contras or for his oratorical abilities generally. Even John Kerry, who had led a subcommitee investigation on the illegal support of the contras, was excluded. On the House side ar-

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ticulate partisan Republicans were "matched" by a balanced and uninspiring group of committee chairmen and senior statesmen. In all, the count was 15 to 8 in support of the contras, with three waverers.

It may have been an admirable goal to avoid discussing the merits of contra policy, but it was not one shared by Oliver North, Robert Owen, Robert McFarlane, Richard Secord, and the House Republicans. Without Democratic counterbalances, no wonder Americans lost sight of why it's important that the National Security Council obey laws. The executive branch skirts congressional rules all the time, after all, and Congress really is so fickle about these things. But what the administration did was not the moral equivalent of HUD giving out an Urban Development Action Grant according to the wrong formula. It was an illegal *war*. If references to Sandinista atrocities had occasionally been countered with a stern reminder that Congress cut off contra aid in part because of contra atrocities, it would have given a human face to abstract legal questions. Families and villages were destroyed because of Oliver North's can-do gusto. The point of such arguments would be not to turn people against the contras but to show why the "rule of law" is not trivial.

The disappearing lunch

In an odd way, Mitchell and Cohen succeed where the committee failed: showing clearly that the Iran-contra affair truly was an ugly chapter of American history, not simply a series of "mistaken" policies. Indeed their summaries of the hearings also provide an implicit criticism of the press, which too often failed to convey some of the scandal's most appalling elements. You may remember McFarlane's cake or Robert Owen's travelers checks, but you may have forgotten, or never heard, some of the other outrageous examples Mitchell and Cohen recall:

► Poindexter testified that not only did North and Hakim negotiate for the release of the Da'Wa Kuwaiti terrorists but Reagan actually approved the plan.

► McFarlane, North, and Weinberger all testified that Reagan's main interest in the arms deal was concern for the hostages. Reagan did not buckle to the forceful wishes of advisers and see the plan gradually "evolve" into an arms-for-hostages deal. He overrode the forceful objections of his two senior advisers. In fact, when asked who made the best argument for going ahead with the sale, Weinberger said, "Perhaps the president."

► McFarlane said the Boland amendment *did* apply to the National Security Council. He and North simply denied the NSC was involved with the

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contras.

► Among North's other ideas were kidnapping the Iranian ambassador and having the contras capture territory on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua so Americans would rally to an Alamo-like stand.

► Shultz seems to have been misled not just by North and Poindexter but repeatedly by President Reagan. On two different occasions Reagan listened politely and apparently with an open mind to Shultz's arguments against arms sales without mentioning that he had already signed the approvals for those sales.

► Innumerable important questions remain unanswered because Poindexter said 184 times that he couldn't remember. The lapses covered major events such as whether he ever saw five memos on the arms sales and diversions, what transpired during his conversation with North about the president's knowledge of the diversion, and what happened at his lunch with Casey on November 22. (The latter is perhaps most incredible: the arms sales had been disclosed publicly nearly three weeks earlier. Poindexter had caused Reagan to lie in public twice through misleading briefings. Meese's investigation was underway. On the previous day Poindexter had destroyed the finding identifying the transaction as a straight arms-for-hostages trade. But Poindexter said he couldn't recall anything about his two-hour lunch with Casey.)

► Was that security fence really going to thwart Abu Nidal?

► In addition to some of the well-known examples of Meese botching the investigation, the authors remind us of Mitchell's line of questioning about the shredding that took place after the diversion memo had been found.

Meese: "Well, we don't know whether those were relevant documents, irrelevant documents, or what they were."

Mitchell: "Do you think Colonel North spent from 11:00 in the evening until 4:15 the next morning destroying irrelevant documents?"

Meese: "I think he probably did."

Another incredible exchange occurred when Meese informed North they had found the diversion memo. North was visibly surprised. He asked if they had found a "cover memo." Without questioning North on what memo he might be referring to, William Bradford Reynolds responded that no, they hadn't found such a memo. Meese then asked North if they should have found a memo. North said "no."

Finally, Mitchell and Cohen make an interesting point supporting the theory that Meese's behavior was less incompetence than collusion. They note that each interview by Meese (except one with Casey),

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up to and including the one with North, was "conducted in a precise, professional manner: at least one other person was present [a member of Meese's staff] and detailed, written notes were kept of what was said." But, after North, every interview was conducted without notes.

► Ronald Reagan *still* has not criticized Poindexter or North.

Ultimately, the most depressing thing about the Iran-contra affair was that it didn't seem to matter all that much. In a few months Reagan will be saying good-bye to a misty-eyed nation, Poindexter's lawyers will be thinking of ever more creative ways of avoiding trial, and North will be getting higher lecture fees and longer ovations. Fundamentally, people value other qualities more than adherence to democratic principles. Someone *really* fighting for something he believes in is admirable even if he's running an illegal war. Cover-ups, lies, and obstruction of justice are okay as long as you later admit you lied and explain that it was for a good cause. That Americans still admire these men of zeal in spite of the Iran-contra hearings shows that the committee's failure was monumental. □

When Southern writers flipped through family photo albums, it was like seeing race, class, and their childhoods for the first time.

South Toward Home

by Anna Quindlen

Those of us born and bred north of the Mason-Dixon line who have gone on to write for a living have a fantasy, based on an amalgam of Walker Percy, William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, Eudora Welty, and Tennessee Williams, that southern writers have an edge. There is always the suspicion they have had childhoods so rich in atmosphere, eccentricity, and the wryest sort of pain that from the beginning they have an advantage in the creation of fiction that those of us who grew up surrounded by heavy industry and Wonder Bread can only envy. This book* only cements this fantasy.

Of course, that is not all it does. To begin with, it is a collection of pieces from some of the best southern contemporary writers, including Bobbie Ann Mason, Barry Hannah, Padgett Powell, and Robb Forman Dew. And in their recollections we see the region not as the monolithic land of slow-talking and easy-living as northerners sometimes envision but in the fullness of its awesome class stratifications, social customs, and, above all, racial complexity.

Moreover, recollections are inspired by a device so stunning in its simplicity and absolute rightness that it is a wonder it hasn't been tried a dozen times before. Each writer was asked by Alex Harris, the director of the Center for Documentary Photography at Duke University, to use family photographs to inspire a piece of writing. "With this book, we move away from a traditional format of documentary publication in which a photographer looks at the world and a writer explains what the photographer sees," Harris writes in his introduction, a lovely bit of writing itself about the mesmerizing effect family

Anna Quindlen writes the "Life in the 30s" column for The New York Times.

**A World Unsuspected: Portraits of Southern Childhood.* Alex Harris, ed. *University of North Carolina Press, $16.95.*

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albums had on him as a boy. Instead, the writers have looked at the pictures and explained what they see in their mind's eye, with the pictures included.

As soon as you open the book you know the results must be inspired, for aren't those crowded black and white snapshots from a Brownie camera the most potent childhood referents? Buzz-saw haircuts on the little boys, neat little outfits with matching purses for the teenage girls, and a whole world is conjured up. Add to this the great skill of the contributors, and the results are wonderful.

Robb Forman Dew, second from right.

It is instructive to see the differences among approaches. Some confront the pictures directly. Josephine Humphreys offers a vivid rendering of her grandmother occasioned by a series of stiff Christmas portraits the old woman arranged each year. Padgett Powell composes a wry essay on the aspects of character found in early snapshots. "Surely the running-board leg is my own touch," he notes of himself at age five, surrounded by little girls with bare legs, his own hoisted like a matinee idol onto the side of the car.

James Alan McPherson's memoir about rootlessness, childhood insecurity, disappointment, and forgiveness centers on a picture of a young black man standing in front of a shanty. He is holding a comic book and wearing a down jacket. "This is the only picture I have of my father," McPherson begins. "It was taken sometime in the 1930s, at his mother's family home in Hardeeville, South Carolina, when he was a young man. I have known all along that he liked comic books. Someone has pointed out to me that he is wearing a down jacket. The wearing of down jackets did not become fashionable until many years after this picture was taken. But a down jacket would be most comfortable during the cool, rainy winters that settle into the coastal areas of Georgia and South Carolina. My

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James Allen McPherson Sr.

father's roots were in this region. Knowing its climate, he must have dressed with an eye toward comfort.

"Someone else has noted that he seems arrogant. I cannot remember him this way, although some arrogance, for him, was possible. But most likely his arms are crossed and his eyes are closed and his head is tilted because he is asleep. I have learned that he suffered from narcolepsy. . . ."

As you look from the prose to the photograph you agree: Yes, arrogant. No. Yes, not arrogant. Asleep. It is as though you are hand in hand with the author, not only in the place where he has taken you but on the journey he has made to get there.

Others use the photographs only as a starting point and do not refer to them directly. Still there is a complicity between the writer and the reader that is exhilarating and unexpected. In her painful recollection of her girlhood, "The Power and the Glory," Robb Forman Dew begins with the unforgettable sentence, "I had a wonderful personality until I was about fourteen when I was simply too tired to have it anymore." The opening is accompanied by a photograph of the Westdale Junior High Homecoming Court—the author is second from the right, 14, and wearing a corsage and a hat—and it is all there: the personality and the strain. It *looks* tiring.

In the same piece, the pictures also work against the recollections. There is a photo of Dew's parents on their wedding day, two unusually handsome people smiling into one another's eyes. While her account of her father's descent into alcoholism is affecting enough, the newly minted optimism of the photograph gives it a special edge.

There are other points worth noting: The writing, ranging from Mr. Powell's rich meanderings to Ms. Mason's almost journalistic rendering of her time as a fan club aficionado, is uniformly first-rate. The pieces also illustrate strongly—the pictures too, for that matter—what northern writers sometimes forget: that the southern experience is wildly diverse. We get Dew's account of relentlessly nurturing her charm—"the lovely solipsism of southern girlhood," she calls it. By way of sharp contrast comes McPherson's recollections of moving from place to place and visiting his father with "a wire screen between him and us" in prison.

Both McPherson and Dew say a good deal about race. Dew's southern belle behavior is shaken one day on a routine ferry ride across the Mississippi river when, as she puts it, "I awakened to the whole world" and realized that the side of the boat marked "White" had only a handful of passengers and the side marked "Colored" was terribly crowded. "You know, this is ridiculous," she tells her girlfriends, in the sort of naive, knocked-over-the-head-by-truth tone that so often characterizes white discovery of racism. "We're all on the same boat."

McPherson's, too, is a child's consciousness, of reading all day at the colored branch of the library and going to the best colored school in Savannah. His father, a talented electrician, has his license revoked and his dreams of opening his own business blighted. But his family is never sure whether his problem is his color or his drinking. One day a retired county official comes to call: "My mother said he asked, 'Is this Mac's son?' Then he said, 'Mac was a brilliant man. That liquor just got to him.' Then he said, 'Mable, I never had anything against the colored. Now both of us are old. Can I come around sometime and sit with you?' "

There's also a heartbreakingly funny account by Al Young about trying to tote a too-large watermelon home from his grandfather's fields when he was four and an account by T.R. Pearson of going to the beach with his family that will be instantly familiar to anyone who's ever done it. The complexities of race and class, the awesome powers of memory, the right writers and a wonderful idea—it's all here. I'm trying to find something bad to say about this book, but I can't. □

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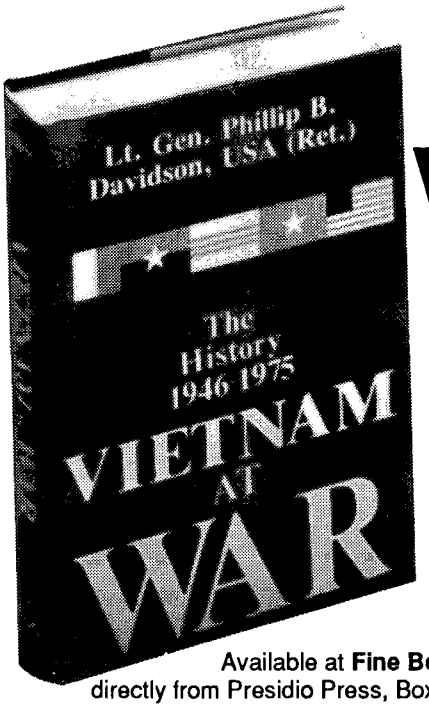

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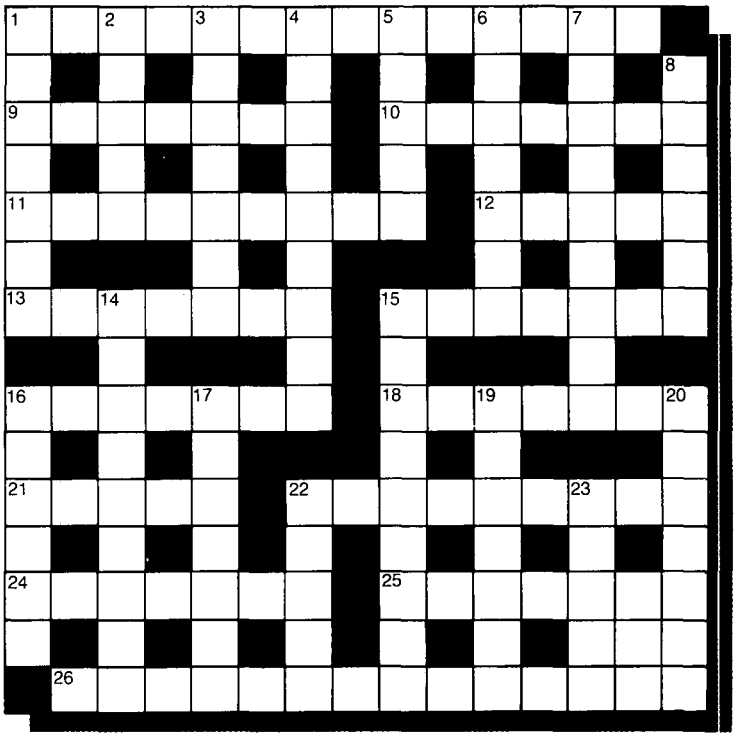
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word.



ACROSS

1. Then her big move set for campaign end. (8,6)
9. Henry, or George, for example. (7)
10. Much more troubling when wild racers surround one. (7)
11. Puff on Washington, for example. (9)
12. Twice-directed birds. (5)
13. Exclude essential moue, we hear. (4,3)
15. Mark a sitter savagely. (7)
16. Soon bashful about food waste and end of fowl. (7)
18. Slowly consumes crooked lines around projectile. (7)
21. First lady transportation system without exception. (5)
22. Moved aimlessly resolving dream need. (9)
24. Fixes signal in afterthought. (7)
25. Popular costume to possess. (7)
26. Way to entertain candidates' children in the hustings? (8,6)

DOWN

1. Badly worn key state. (3,4)
2. Chopped veal takes you in for estimate. (5)
3. Intends to organize no teams. (5,2)
4. Strangely yell "agent" in style. (9)
5. Follow uranium in four directions. (5)
6. Larger fowl ingests last of fodder. (7)
7. Base storyteller coming back for power source. (5,4)
8. Island dweller as a matter of course. (6)
14. Little understood items raise cost deviously. (9)
15. Feeling about nose stain. (9)
16. Plain stage before physical education. (6)
17. Why photos developed into mall feature. (3,4)
19. Awkward bows had British put down. (3,4)
20. Artfully teased someone at first and puts him to sleep. (7)
22. African beginning march upset continent. (5)
23. Bird in flight tends to throb incessantly. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:

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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

Why Presidents Succeed: A Political Psychology of Leadership. Dean Keith Simonton. *Yale University Press, $22.50.* This book is part of a wounded tradition of presidential scholarship. The failure of the field can be seen in the fact that Richard Neustadt's *Presidential Power* still ranks among the preeminent texts. Taking nothing away from it, it is a quarter century old and, despite recent updates, remains something of a period piece. That Neustadt continues to hold such a prominent place in the literature of the presidency tells us some things both about the office and those who choose to study it. And Simonton's failures, and occasional strengths, help explain why we don't have better books about those who occupy the Oval Office.

What hinders the study of the presidency? First, there's the problem of access. The closer scholars can get to an institution, the better the research is likely to be. Not surprisingly, then, the literature on Congress is abundant and of high quality, and research on the House of Representatives is better and more plentiful than that on the U.S. Senate, in large measure because the House is more open. While the Supreme Court in its icy palace might seem to be an unlikely focus of scholarship, it is actually quite rich, if for no other reason than the fact that opinions are published and reflect on both the reasoning and philosophy of their authors.

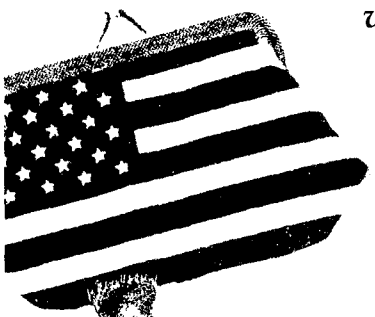
True, the presidency itself is very visible, but its operations are hidden from the public eye. And ex-presidents haven't helped the cause of scholarship much. They may endow huge libraries but they have yet to write any revealing veto-and-tell memoirs. Jimmy Carter's, the most recent, is virtually unreadable; Nixon's are so suffused with wounded innocence that they should have been printed on Kleenex. The literature of White House staff and advisers is similarly flawed—ranging from Brzezinski's sententiously titled *Power and Principle* to Califano's arrogantly titled *Governing America*. Their pomposity is enough to make a person long for a presidential memoir entitled, *Gabbing with Gorbo* or *Putting the Red Phone on Hold*.

To be sure, we do know bits and pieces about individual presidents, particularly recent ones, because of the long primary season. But much of it may be useless in understanding how they govern. Campaign reporters uncovered that Ronald Reagan's favorite meal is macaroni and cheese and that Richard Nixon put ketchup on his scrambled eggs. But looking back on the campaign coverage there was little to tell us about the mesh of personality and institution that gave us scandals like Watergate and the Iran-contra affair.

Students of the presidency have long sought to post a scholar-in-residence at the White House. But I'm not sure that would help much; nor would two scholars, one to check on the honesty of the other. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., a person of more than middling honesty and intelligence, was almost as hagiographic in his writing as was Dave Powers, author of that detached piece of scholarship *Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye.* Having tried myself to bring this off in two-year-long stints studying Congress, I found it hard not to be contaminated by loyalty. And if you risk becoming a cheerleader as a Capitol Hill staffer, imagine the seductive influences of the Oval Office.

The problems of access associated with the presidency are exacerbated by the restless need of modern political science to quantify the human behavior it studies. Our conclusions are most persuasive when we use vast numbers to yield important correlations or associations. The presidency, however, does not exactly provide a wealth of statistics. What you are left with in your search for regularities in the conduct of the office is 37 people over a 200-year period. Contrast this with Congress, where almost 12,000 have served and which has seen 31,000 congressional elections since 1789. Presidential scholars have to coax sweeping conclusions from some very skimpy numbers. Simonton's book is an honest effort to sort out the question of why presidents succeed, but it ends

*"Fascinating. Policy makers, candidates, and voters would all benefit from reading it."**



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up being unpersuasive because of the small number of cases used to back up this ambitious effort.

How does he go about it? First, he accepts at face value the judgment of several scholarly panels that have distinguished great presidents from not-so-great presidents, using factors like popularity in the polls and success at pushing through major legislation. The results are not exactly surprising: Washington, Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, Wilson, and FDR are consensus choices for "greatness," and Grant, Harding and Buchanan are pretty much the pits. The whole idea of ranking presidents may sound foolish, but there is value to the enterprise. The consistent judgment of scholars from so many different fields—political science, history, sociology—over such a long period of time is impressive. When virtually everyone points to Lincoln as a great president, it's worth asking why.

The purpose of Simonton's book is to look at the great presidents, find out what they have in common, and construct a formula that will predict greatness. Not surprisingly, as a social psychologist, Simonton puts as much emphasis on personality as he does on politics. From this vantage point, birth order becomes as important as ideology or party affiliation.

A composite figure of a president that Simonton finds likely to be adjudged great: he (certainly not she, since the database on female presidents is rather small) would come to the presidency after having had a distinguished military career and written prolifically. He would come from a family of three or fewer siblings, would remain in office for a long time, and be assassinated. Being the object of an unsuccessful attempt on your life won't do. You've got to be hit.

Before you sneer at this as a kind of Presidential Aptitude Test, keep in mind that Simonton judiciously claims nothing more for his data than what the statistics will bear and acknowledges the eternal importance of Machiavelli's *fortuna*: presidents benefit who lead the nation to victory in wars they didn't start or who prosper from economic cycles over which they had little influence. (It is as true in politics as it is on Wall Street that greatness shouldn't be confused with a bull market.) And he also presents compelling evidence that it is probably better to have a president with few close friendships than one who lets those close to him corrupt him with favoritism. Reflect on the reluctance of Michael Dukakis to fire aide John Sasso after the Biden tape incident or Jimmy Carter's tardy dismissal of Bert Lance, not to mention Reagan and Meese.

No one should be intimidated by the number-crunching used to find meaning in statistics that are pathetically small. There is little that is surprising in this inventory and little that has not been observed already by those armed with nothing more than a trained eye and a perceptive mind.

Had we chosen our 1988 nominees based on Simonton's factors we would have looked for a tall, friendless man in his fifties who came from a small family and wrote many books. Scan-

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ning this year's contenders, there was only one who appeared to fit the profile of the great president: Gary Hart.
—*Ross K. Baker*

Going Downtown Jack Broughton. Orion Books, $18.95. Based on his years as a fighter bomber pilot in Vietnam, Broughton has written a damning account of Operation Rolling Thunder, the 1965-68 bombing campaign that was supposed to force Hanoi to sue for peace. Because the U.S. planes flew strike after strike against the same targets, the North Vietnamese became adept at quickly rebuilding factories, bridges, and other structures after they were knocked out. The Air Force also chose the brilliant strategy of using the same airspace and schedules time after time, giving the North Vietnamese anti-aircraft defenses plenty of opportunity to expand and improve.
—*John Damrosch*

The Trustee Presidency: Jimmy Carter and the United States Congress. Charles O. Jones. *Louisiana State University Press, $24.95.* One of the most interesting developments at the Democratic convention in Atlanta in July was the focus it gave to Jimmy Carter. Many of the most significant events, formal and informal, took place at the Carter Center and Carter Library, impressive facilities on an imposing site. Carter gave a prime-time address and appeared at the podium with other dignitaries after Dukakis's acceptance speech.

Clearly, eight years have softened harsh judgments and provided some distance from the pain and immediacy of the Carter presidency. Almost inevitably, historians and political scientists, having had time and access to documents and interviews, are beginning to weigh in with more systematic and definitive analyses of the Carter years. We can hope that they will measure up to the standards set by Jones's study of Carter and his relationship with Congress. Relying heavily on a series of in-depth interviews with key personnel in the Carter administration done by the Miller Center at the University of Virginia, Jones lays out a model of the Carter presidency and systematically explores how it shaped Carter's approach to Congress and Washington.

To Jones, Jimmy Carter saw himself clearly as a "trustee" in the Burkean sense—as one elected to do what is right in his own judgment, in contrast to a "delegate," one elected to represent faithfully the views of others, one whose actions are dominated by politics. Edmund Burke laid out the model 215 years ago, and his words, quoted by Jones, apply unerringly to Carter.

The Trustee Presidency is a balanced and even-handed examination of one key aspect of the Carter presidency, written by one of the best scholars of Congress. Given Jones's long immersion in Congress, the book ends up coming out surprisingly sympathetic toward Carter, and even more surprisingly, sympathetic towards Carter's much-maligned congressional liaison, Frank Moore. That Carter accomplished some of the things he did—water project cuts, civil service reform, energy programs, the Panama Canal Treaty, government reorganization—suggests that a Trustee Presidency is not entirely ineffective or obsolete. Jones uses rigorous social science but in a compact, readable form. This is a very good book, coming at a very appropriate time. —*Norman Ornstein*

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Bifurcated Politics: Evolution and Reform in the National Party Convention. Byron E. Shafer. *Harvard University Press, $27.50.* There are times, all too rare, when a scholarly book is on the cutting edge of the news. Shafer's is one of those books. Just as the networks, the political strategists, the print media, and the political parties themselves are attempting to come to grips with the realization that conventions no longer meet traditional expectations, Shafer has produced an incisive analysis of these gatherings.

He takes as his starting point the obvious: that conventions no longer nominate presidents. Primary and caucus electorates do. Instead, conventions have become launching pads, sometimes providing an exemplary lift-off, sometimes not. Sounds simple, but from these elementary facts Shafer builds an elegant argument, extending beyond conventions to illuminate the interior political dynamics of the new, post-1968 political parties.

For both parties, the last "nominating" conventions were in 1952, 36 years ago, when Adlai Stevenson needed three ballots to beat Estes Kefauver and Dwight Eisenhower had to demonstrate his strength in a series of credentials battles in his contest with Robert Taft. It was not, however, until after 1968 that Democratic-initiated reforms radically altered the delegate selection process for both parties. State legislatures created more primaries and caucuses, shifting power from party officials meeting at the conventions to the voters.

Shafer's data demonstrates that the percentage of Democratic delegates chosen by party structures fell from 57 percent in 1968 to 18 percent in 1972 and to 9 percent in 1976. For the GOP, the process was a little slower, falling from 52 percent party-selected delegates in 1968 to 39 percent in 1972 and to 15 percent in 1976. Reforms have left the leaders with very little power to broker.

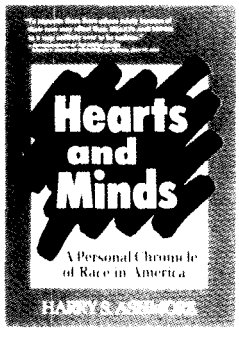
Within this political setting, Shafer also describes how the domination of convention proceedings by television and the growing power of special interest groups (such as the National Education Association and the Moral Majority) in the selection of delegates have converted conventions into new battlefields.

One struggle takes place between the prospective nominee and the competing collection of special interests —both those supportive of the nominee and those linked to the losers— over the convention agenda. The candidate's goal is to suppress conflict and demonstrate full executive control, while the delegates committed to a special interest try to get their issues fully before the convention and television cameras. Of course these interests can use the *threat* of a prime-time protest to coerce the nominee and the party into recognizing them.

George McGovern is the quintessential example of the candidate who could not maintain control over the constituencies he had mobilized to win the nomination. For instance, his vice-presidential choice of Sen. Thomas Eagleton was challenged on the floor by feminists, many of whom backed McGovern but insisted on running Frances Farenthold of Texas against Eagleton. "Not only did this full range of conflicts deny the nominee much chance to orchestrate his own convention...," Shafer writes, "his acceptance speech... could not be delivered until 3 a.m. eastern time, when an estimated 80 percent of the earlier viewing audience had already gone to bed."

By contrast, in 1984 Ronald Reagan ran as an unchallenged incumbent who was able to fully orchestrate his convention, suppressing all conflicts between moderates and the new right, the country club traditionalists, and the Christian fundamentalists. Shafer points out that the party holding a convention with lower levels of conflict has, at least for the elections from 1964 through 1984, been the winner in November.

The convention is also a struggle between the strategists for prospective presidential nominees and the networks themselves. Ironically, this contest becomes most intense in relatively conflict-free conventions. The



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networks feel they have become appendages of the political campaigns. This was epitomized by the dispute over coverage of the video used to introduce President Reagan in 1984, coverage that only ABC agreed to supply.

The battle between the networks and the winning campaigns has become all the more important as the networks have cut back coverage. Cutbacks mean that convention managers can no longer be confident that the events they have scheduled will be covered; within smaller time periods the networks can, at any time, cut away to their own commentary, to separate discussions of issues, or to their own prepared stories. This was the case with ABC in Atlanta in July when the network broke from Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton's nominating speech to present a Jeff Greenfield story on Dukakis's early political career. (In that case, ABC may have done Dukakis a favor, as Clinton's speech was one of the less gripping events of the 1988 Democratic convention.)

It now appears that insights such as Shafer's are beginning to be reflected in the thinking of both political strategists and media officials. There is a growing consensus that the parties should reduce the number of days for the convention from four to three, a reflection both of the lack of genuine nomination drama and of declining television coverage.

In the long run, however, the developments cited by Shafer point toward growing pressures within each party to suppress conflict—lest disputes hurt the nominee's chances in November. This development is already evident in the calculated blandness of the Dukakis and Bush campaigns, as each has assiduously sought to paper over the substantial intra-party conflicts facing both Democrats and Republicans.

This need for consensus bodes well for the GOP. Despite the infusion of Christian fundamentalists, the GOP remains far more homogeneous than the Democratic Party, whose racial diversity alone may, for the moment, help foster a public image of internal conflict. The pressure for low-conflict conventions could push the parties in a number of different directions. On the one hand, such pressure could turn pluralism, once a strength in American party politics, into a weakness. Conversely, television might also force each of the parties to begin in the presidental primaries and caucuses to productively address the internal conflicts that could become debilitating if left unaddressed by convention time—conflicts for example, between blacks and blue-collar whites, between supply-siders and traditionalists concerned with deficits, between unionists and suburban reformers, between moralists and libertarians. What's certain is that both parties have adapted remarkably to a political environment changing at an increasingly rapid pace.

—Thomas Byrne Edsall

Leadership in the Modern Presidency. Fred I. Greenstein ed., *Harvard University Press, $29.95.* Greenstein, one of the most industrious and insightful political scientists, recruited essay writers to portray presidents from Franklin Roosevelt to Ronald Reagan. He thinks the presidency "has become firmly institutionalized and is undergoing its own evolution." By institutionalized, he means that the office is more likely to determine a president's performance than is the occupant's personality.

Greenstein sees the modern presidency as triggered by FDR in 1933. Since then, four major changes have evolved: "increased unilateral policy-making capacity" (presidents give orders), "centrality in national agenda setting" (pushing, not reacting), "far greater visibility" (via media), and "acquisition of a presidential bureaucracy" (a big corporation, not a shoe shop).

That the presidency has got itself institutionalized—fixed beyond the person in the Oval Office—is questionable. Sure enough, the above four factors are standing at attention as each new president takes office. But some grab them and go, while others slack back. And even if a president can command those instituted factors,

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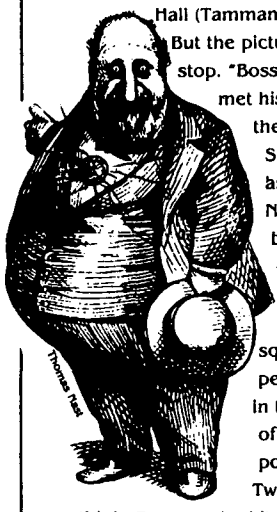

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they point in no direction. For example, Greenstein is right when he sees the bureaucracy as available for presidents "to use, to abuse, or lose control over discretionary policy making."

As for the evolution, doubts arise as well. The Roosevelt-Truman-Eisenhower serial looks evolutionary as the welfare state stepped forward first beyond Roosevelt and then beyond Democrats. But thereafter the Darwinism begins to scatter, as when "Kennedy's Executive Office operating methods departed most dramatically from Eisenhower's in the area of foreign affairs" and as when "Johnson left office, American politics was becoming even more intractable for presidential leadership than it had been in the 1940s and 1950s," as well as the Carter to Reagan bump, which illustrates character and style more than institutional evolution.

More convincing than the theory are the bits of wisdom this book offers. Like King Solomon, Greenstein does not hesitate to pronounce straightforward lessons. Should the power of the White House be raised and firmed? It depends on what will be done with that power. If we get a punk president, he needs reigning in, not turning loose.

The collected essays, uneven as they are, do set forth lessons of history likely to be confirmed. Especially useful is William Leuchtenburg's commentary on FDR, who succeeded in guiding us through a time when our democracy could have broken and died. Leuchtenburg sees that Roosevelt did not do everything right. But if I were elected president this November, I would spend Thanksgiving reading of Roosevelt: how he made use of professors without falling into their class, how he moved his vision beyond the short-term myopia to a new ideal of the rights of humans.

I agree with some of the characterizations and disagree with others. As for the former, Alonzo Hamby, linking Truman's complex and fascinating biography to his presidential style, tells how that surprised president rose to the occasion and started externalizing a system FDR had located mainly within himself. In an essay on Eisenhower, Greenstein reiterates his argument that Ike was a behind-the-scenes doer. Carl Bauer is on target in focusing on Jack Kennedy's inspirational mode. Larry Berman reports LBJ's own recognition—far too late—that he was wrong about Vietnam. In contrast, Joan Hoff-Wilson sees Nixon as a "corporate" president with "an impressive foreign and domestic record," which makes one wonder if she has read about his for-sure impeachment or has taken a stroll through the Vietnam memorial. Roger Porter confirms Ford as a healer. Erwin Hargrove sees Jimmy Carter's "greatest deficiency as president" not as a Washington problem but as a national problem: "his inability to establish a bond with the public." The essays culminate in a piece on Reagan's rhetoric, by William K. Muir Jr., which supposes Reagan was involved in writing his own speeches. It's Muir's contention that "what is required to make society understandable even to the youngest and least experienced Americans is metaphor." I should have thought it was reality.

Interesting reading. Material waiting to be sifted so that the great big rights and wrongs presidents do are not fuzzed over by institutional trivialities.

—*James David Barber*

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